QUADRENNIAL (SIGH) RECRIMINATIONS ISSUE

PETER BEINART, REPRESENTATIVE BRAD CARSON, ANDREI CHERNY, RYAN LIZZA, MARTIN PERETZ, ELIOT SPITZER, ANDREW SULLIVAN, LEON WIESELTIER

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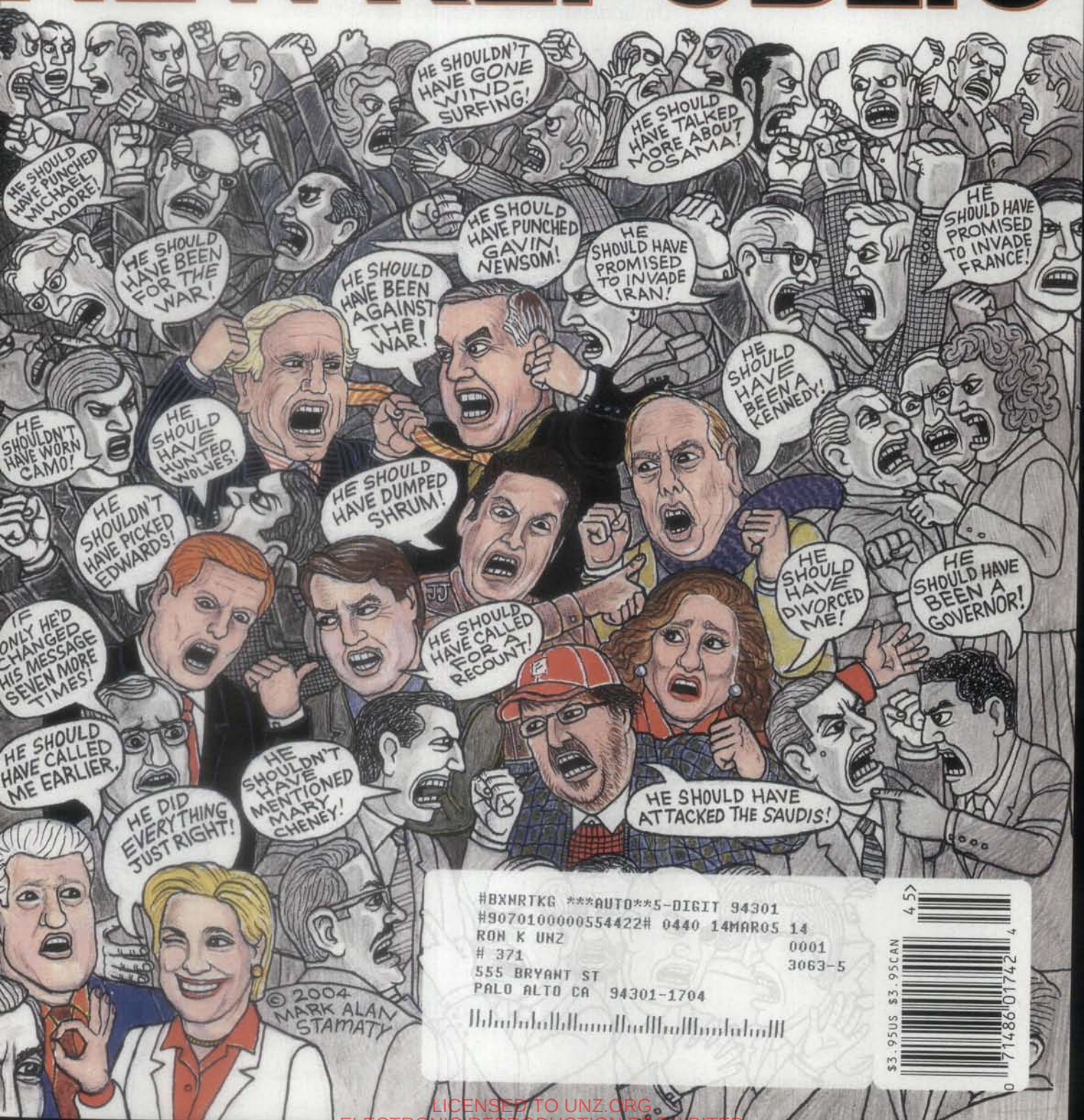
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE WIND-SURFING!
HE SHOULD HAVE TALKED MORE ABOUT OSAMA!
HE SHOULD HAVE PUNCHED MICHAEL MOORE!
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOR THE WAR!
HE SHOULD HAVE PUNCHED GAVIN NEWSOM!
HE SHOULD HAVE PROMISED TO INVADE IRAN!
HE SHOULD HAVE PROMISED TO INVADE FRANCE!
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN AGAINST THE WAR!
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A KENNEDY!
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE WORN CAMO!
HE SHOULD HAVE HUNTED WOLVES!
HE SHOULD HAVE DUMPED SHRUM!
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE PICKED EDWARDS!
HE SHOULD HAVE DIVORCED ME!
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A GOVERNOR!
IF ONLY HE'D CHANGED HIS MESSAGE SEVEN MORE TIMES!
HE SHOULD HAVE CALLED FOR A RECOUNT!
HE SHOULD HAVE CALLED ME EARLIER.
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE MENTIONED MARY CHENEY!
HE DID EVERYTHING JUST RIGHT!
HE SHOULD HAVE ATTACKED THE SAUDIS!
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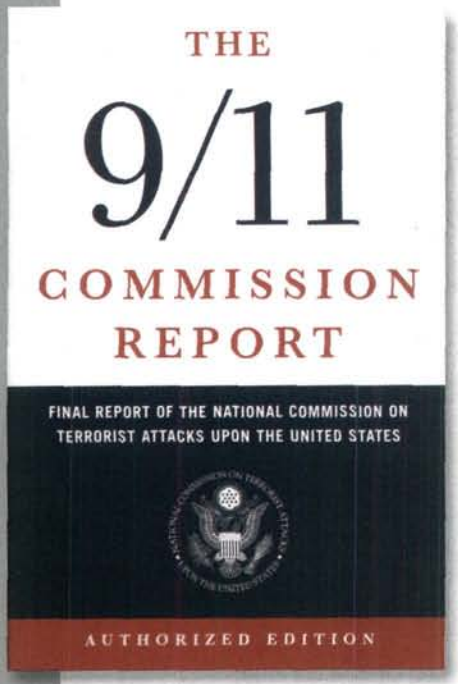
For far too long, rumors have been accepted as truth. The impartial, bi-partisan conclusions of the 9-11 Commission finally reveal the facts.



On accusations of support for Al-Qaeda...

"...we have found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded the organization."

On allegations of clandestine flights and political favors...

"First, we found no evidence that any flights of Saudi nationals, domestic or international, took place before the reopening of national airspace.... Second, we found no evidence of political intervention."

"...no one with known links to terrorism departed on these flights."

On charges of too little, too late...

"The CIA learned in the spring of 1998 that the Saudi government had quietly disrupted Bin Ladin cells in its country that were planning to attack U.S. forces.... They had arrested scores of individuals with no publicity."

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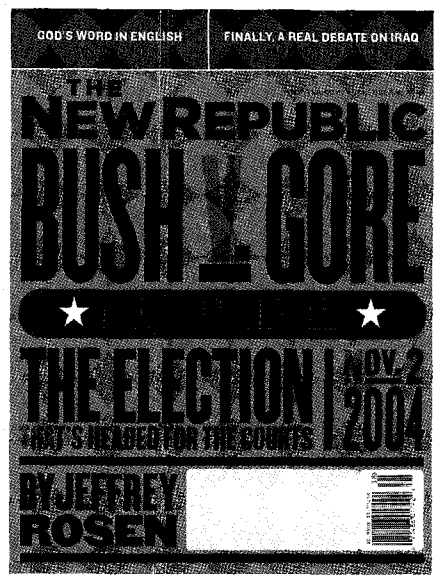
CORRESPONDENCE

WORDS OF GOD

ROBERT ALTER HAS CERTAINLY CONtributed much of value to the field of biblical scholarship (Cynthia Ozick, "And God Saw Literature, That It Was Good," October 4). His keen eyes (and ears) have yielded sensitive, original insights into the meaning of the biblical text. But Ozick's grandiose endorsement of Alter's new translation of the Bible as "historically astounding" overshoots the mark. Virtually every single feature cited by Ozick as evidence of the uniqueness of Alter's translation actually has precursors in the work of previous translators. And, in an ironic twist, it is the translations of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Everett Fox—whose translation Ozick considers "awkward" and "not normative English"—that anticipate elements in Alter's translation, with which Ozick is so enamored.

To cite just a few examples, Ozick notes Alter's condemnation of "the heresy of explanation," the tendency of translators to "clarify"—and thereby unwittingly diminish—the meaning of Scripture. Alter's phrase is surely memorable, but it is hardly different from Rosenzweig's complaint that idiomatic translations read "as if a sergeant attempted in his giving orders to 'explicate' the classical commands of field duty ordnance." Ozick also relays Alter's insistence that a translation "avoid at all costs the ... abomination of elegant synonymous variation," as "the literary prose of the Bible turns everywhere on significant repetition." In this demand, Alter is demonstrably following the pioneering work on the biblical *leitwort* ("leadword") done by Buber and Rosenzweig in the early decades of the twentieth century. In one of his many discourses on the topic, Buber defines the *leitwort* as "a word or word root that is meaningfully repeated. ... Such measured repetition ... is probably the strongest of all techniques for making a meaning available without articulating it explicitly."

Ozick's treatment of Alter's alliteration betrays a similar lack of perspective. In her mind, Alter's *tohu-vavohu*—"welter and waste"—represents nothing short of "one translator's own little miracle; no committee could hope to arrive at it." If Ozick is correct, then



Fox is a prolific miracle-worker and his translation cannot be rightly considered the work of a committee (contrary to Ozick's absurd estimation of his work). In Deuteronomy 26:5, the Israelite farmer is instructed to bring an offering and to recount Israel's humble beginnings in Mesopotamia. The Hebrew text begins with *arami oved avi*, three words each beginning with the Hebrew letter *aleph*. Fox, sensitive to the alliteration, renders, "An Aramean Astray my Ancestor."

The same exercise could be extended to most every other aspect of Alter's translation that Ozick highlights. Of course, none of this means that Alter's translation isn't worthwhile or doesn't contain original research; it is and it does. But readers (and critics) should realize that no modern Bible translation is created in a vacuum and that translations like Alter's owe much to the prior, valuable work of other scholars.

JUDAH KRAUT
West Hempstead, New York

CYNTHIA OZICK RESPONDS:
It goes without (again!) saying that Alter has benefited, as Judah Kraut writes, from "precursors in the work of previous translators," as I confirmed in naming Alter's "manifold influences and appreciations," and as Alter himself repeatedly acknowledges in his rich and copious commentaries. In fact, one of Alter's keenest and fullest notes touches on the very passage cited by Kraut. It is there, with references to abundant earlier scholarship—etymological, agricultural, historical, metaphysical—that Alter, while remarking that the "precise meaning of the verb *oved* has long been in dispute," decides against the choice of "wandering" or "lost," implicitly also excluding Fox's "astray."

For my part, it is hard to assent to Kraut's admiration for the strained and improbable "An Aramean Astray my Ancestor," which strikes an ear attuned to English as a kind of jabberwocky: Not all attempts at alliterative mimesis are equal. Alter's "welter and waste" rises out of deep Anglo-Saxon roots, made magically consonant with the Hebrew; Fox's switch of initial *aleph* into initial *a* is merely that: a switch, with no resonance in recognizable common English. And recognizable common English—is it necessary to utter this?—is the *point* of translation.

Which is why Kraut's observation that Buber and Rosenzweig "anticipate elements in Alter's translation" is irrelevant. Buber and Rosenzweig—working in their native German—also comment on the biblical uses of repetition? Rosenzweig also complains of gratuitously added explication? True enough; but how does this justify Kraut's seeming conviction that general principles of translation, however prior their assertion, have any bearing on the aptness or success of a particular phrase rendered into English? More emphatically, how do Buber and Rosenzweig justify Kraut's apparent belief that "an Aramean Astray my Ancestor" is passable (let alone miraculous) English? ■

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United They Fall

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

It's been a week since George W. Bush defeated John Kerry, and something strange is happening: Democrats aren't beating each other's brains out. The papers are largely free of really nasty quotes about Kerry or his campaign staff. Senate Democrats have chosen a new minority leader and a new minority whip in uncontested contests devoid of rancor. Even the early names for 2008 don't divide into clear ideological camps. Oddly enough, the Democrats seem almost as united in defeat as they were during the campaign.

One reason is that many of the Democrats inclined to cause trouble are gone. With the loss of five Southern Senate seats, the high-profile conservative Democrats who might have urged the party to reject gay rights or embrace Social Security privatization—people like Louisiana's John Breaux, not to mention Georgia's Zell Miller—are no longer around.

Even more surprising than the silence on the party's right is the silence on the party's left. I have yet to hear a single prominent Democrat say Kerry lost because he wasn't sufficiently antiwar. Partly, that's because liberals can't say Kerry didn't mobilize the base. But, more broadly, I suspect it's because Iraq obscured the fact that, on most issues, the divisions between the party's liberal and New Democratic wings simply aren't that great. Howard Dean, we tend to forget, was a deficit hawk and a former Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) poster child who had backed the Gulf war. He wanted the Democrats to be more aggressive, but not necessarily more extreme. And, now that the party has become more aggressive in its opposition to Bush, his supporters seem relatively content.

Adding to the current unity is the absence of party conflict over race. When Democrats lost presidential elections in the 1980s, black Democrats and the centrist DLC went to war over racially loaded issues like taxes, welfare, and crime. But today's Republican victories aren't pitting white and black Democrats against one another; they are producing a common anxiety. Gay marriage—which seems to have peeled off culturally conservative black, white, and Latino Democrats—affects the party's different racial and ethnic constituencies the same way. In fact, since African Americans are the Democrats most familiar with the language of faith, they may end up shaping the party's response.

But all this unity isn't such a good thing. Democrats seem to be coalescing around the idea that their basic policies are fine. They just need to communicate them better—showing more respect for culturally traditional voters and a tougher image on the war on terrorism.

Unfortunately, that's pretty much the same analysis that led the party to nominate John Kerry in the first place. Primary voters overwhelmingly rejected Joe Lieberman and Richard Gephardt, two culturally moderate candidates who had steadfastly backed the Iraq war. But they grew skittish about Dean, who seemed too angry to win over swing voters. So they chose Kerry, who co-opted Dean's antiwar rhetoric but cut a more moderate, reassuring figure. Today, Democrats say that, as a Massachusetts liberal, Kerry looked weak on terrorism. But, during the primaries, Democrats embraced Kerry in large part because they believed his Vietnam record made him look strong.

Now, Democrats are looking for an even better vehicle for the same ideological consensus. Looking back to Bill Clinton, some suggest a Southern governor. But Clinton wasn't merely a Baptist, Southern-accented Michael Dukakis. He represented a controversial break from the liberal orthodoxy of the '80s. Where Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, and Dukakis had all opposed the death penalty, Clinton embraced it. And, to underscore the point, he left the campaign trail to oversee the execution of mentally retarded murderer Rickey Ray Rector. Where Dukakis and Mondale had endlessly pandered to Jesse Jackson, Clinton outraged the African American left by showing up at Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and denouncing the anti-white rapper Sister Souljah. Where Mondale had proposed raising taxes, Clinton called for a middle-class tax cut. What Clinton recognized—and today's Democrats don't—is that, if you're not making liberals uncomfortable, you're not going to win.

In my view, John Kerry's Sister Souljah opportunity was France. Liberals forget that the conflict between Washington and Paris didn't begin with Dick Cheney; France was actively thwarting American power—and American ideals—throughout the 1990s. Jacques Chirac had the right to oppose the Iraq war, but his virtual campaign to prevent European countries from assisting in the occupation rightly outraged many Americans. Had Kerry stood up to Paris during the campaign, he would have shown he could do so in the Oval Office. And he would have proved that success in the war on terrorism—not multilateralism—was his highest foreign policy principle.

But, while Joe Biden repeatedly criticized European leaders for their complacency in the battle against Islamist barbarism in Iraq, Kerry never did. The reason, I suspect, is that he never viscerally grasped America's post–September 11 anxiety about liberalism. That anxiety is understandable, and thinking it can be assuaged with new cultural packaging is as condescending as thinking it could be overcome by nominating a Vietnam veteran.

The Democrats need an ideological shift on foreign policy akin to the domestic policy shift ushered in by Bill Clinton. When that shift begins, division will replace unity and the bloodletting will begin. It can't start a moment too soon.

■ ■ ■

In my last column ("What Went Wrong," November 15), I wrote, "Honest conservatives, even those who admire Bush, know he didn't earn a second term." That was a poor way of expressing my point: that, judging from the president's low approval rating and the large percentage of people who felt the country was on the "wrong track," Bush had not convinced most Americans he deserved a second term. They gave him one because of their reservations about Kerry. My argument was a political, not a moral, one. I have no doubt that many honest conservatives believe Bush is a good, even great, president, and that, in their eyes, he has earned a second term.

PETER BEINART

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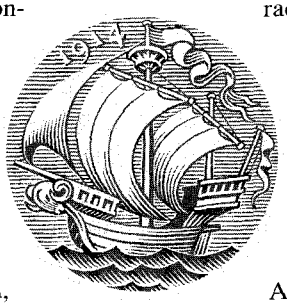
Arafat

YASIR ARAFAT COULD not even die straightforwardly. His final days were like all his days, cloaked in concealment and conspiracy, hostile to truth, pitting factions against one another for the sake of his own cult. The intrigue at the Paris hospital (did he believe that the European Union could save him even from this?) was perfectly grotesque, and perfectly typical. In death, as in life, Arafat remained utterly devoid of grandeur.

A natural death, unlike the first King Abdullah of Jordan, unlike Anwar Sadat, was what Arafat most ardently wanted, the objective to which he again and again subordinated the interests of his people. He lived in fear of the gangster culture that he created. He was the very model of unheroic leadership. His admirers praised him as a survivor, but it was his own survival for which he will finally be known. Rarely has a figure so much littler than history loomed so large in it. Even the Palestinians came to revere the Rais for merely symbolic reasons; they, too, recognized that he gained them nothing. To be sure, he aroused their collective consciousness and imbued them with a national identity; but it would be imprecise, in considering the legacy of this small but catastrophically significant man, to remember him only as the father of the Palestinian nation. For he was responsible not only for the creation of Palestinian nationalism, he was responsible also for the frustration of Palestinian nationalism. He led his people out of the wilderness and into the wilderness. He left them more proud and more wretched.

It is often said that Palestinian nationalism was the mirror image of Jewish nationalism. Both peoples certainly clamored for the same land; but the analogy stops harshly there. For Arafat proved momentously unwilling to take the leap into self-reliance, into the morality and the politics of it, that his Zionist counterparts took. They, too, were once presented with the choice between statehood on much less of the land than their ideology demanded, with the concomitant rescue of their people from refugee camps and the splintering of the national movement, or the preservation of the refugee camps and the national movement by holding out for everything in the name of ideological righteousness. The state of Israel was born because the Zionist leadership resisted, at the excruciating cost of internecine warfare, the maximalist temptation. The state of Palestine has not yet been born because Yasir Arafat succumbed to the maximalist temptation every time. Arafat sometimes accepted Israel in his words, but he never accepted Israel in his deeds. And that is why he never saw Palestine.



Arafat will also be remembered as the most prominent (and the most richly rewarded) face of terrorism in the latter decades of the last century. In this regard, you might say that he was a true pioneer of this century. It is a dubious distinction, and not only because it describes the murder of many innocent people. After all, there were many leaders of national liberation movements who resorted to political violence (Jewish ones, too). But many of them eventually renounced political violence for the responsibilities of sovereignty. Not Arafat. From the founding of the PLO in 1964 to the instigation of the second intifada in 2000, he never gave up the gun. Abu Ammar never stopped being Abu Ammar: He retained the *nom de guerre* because he retained the *guerre*.

And now? On the Palestine side, a ferocious struggle for power and maybe civil war. In fact, the conflict between the modernists and the jihadists has been going on for some time now, but Israeli military actions and the veneer of Palestinian comity provided by Arafat somewhat obscured it. Now the Palestinians will finally have to decide if they will allow Hamas to wreck their prospects for a normal life. Israeli policy will depend significantly on the outcome of this nasty process of Palestinian self-definition. But time is not altogether on Israel's side: The demographic clock is ticking coldly toward midnight, as even Ariel Sharon understands. And so Israel will have to do whatever it can to assist the modernists, the diplomatists, among the Palestinians. This time Sharon must not leave Abu Mazen to his own devices, as he did the last time. The Israelis always said that Arafat was an insurmountable obstacle to peace. Well, the obstacle has been surmounted. We shall not look on his like again—or shall we? ■

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NOTEBOOK

YASIR ARAFAT, DEPARTING . . . CYNTHIA MCKINNEY, RETURNING

DO NOT GO GENTLE

"PA: ARAFAT'S CONDITION MARKEDLY IMPROVING"
—*The Jerusalem Post*, November 2

"IDF: ARAFAT IS 'VERY SICK' "
—*The Jerusalem Post*, November 2

"ARAFAT RECOVERS, BROTHER TAKEN ILL"
—*The Australian*, November 4

"ARAFAT 'BRAIN DEAD' "
—*The Jerusalem Post*, November 5

"PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS VOICE CONCERN AT ARAFAT'S LACK OF IMPROVEMENT"
—Associated Press, November 6

"ARAFAT 'IS OUT OF COMA' "
—*Mail on Sunday*, November 7

"ARAFAT IS ALIVE BUT CONDITION IS VERY COMPLEX, SAY FRENCH"
—*The Independent*, November 8

"ARAFAT DIES IN FRENCH HOSPITAL: MINISTER"
—Agence France-Presse, November 9

"ARAFAT'S CONDITION WORSENS"
—*The Mirror*, November 10

EVER FAITHFUL

SUHA ARAFAT'S UGLY EFFORTS TO keep her husband's associates from seeing their comatose leader in his final hours are, by now, well-known. Less well-known is another battle, reported by *Haaretz*, to keep medical personnel from performing the additional tests that would tell the world what Arafat is actually dying of. Rumors are rampant: cancer, leukemia, kidney failure, liver disease, even AIDS. The Palestinian Authority wants to find out, and, *Haaretz* reports, it has offered Suha $2 million to allow the tests to proceed. But she has refused. If that weren't bad enough, her consigliere in this affair is Pierre Rizk, a Lebanese Maronite active in the nether-

Yasir Arafat

world where cash meets armaments, and who served as chief of intelligence for the Phalange, the group that carried out the 1982 slaughter of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila. Which makes Suha's new man a fitting successor to her old one.

BECAUSE HE WAS SO MODEST IN HIS FIRST TERM

"THE BIG DANGER IS ONE OF hubris."—David Gergen telling *The New York Times* of the perils confronting Bush now that he has won a second term

STEP ONE: ADMIT THE PROBLEM. WHEN DO WE GET TO STEP TWO?

"THERE WAS NOT A NATIONAL message." —Representative Calvin M. Dooley, Democrat, after Democrats lost the presidency in 2000

"[T]here obviously must be a change in Democrat leadership and change the course with a clearer message." —Jesse Jackson, after Democrats lost seats in the House and the Senate in November 2002

"[Democrats] need a clear national message." —Bill Clinton, after Democrats lost the presidential race, as well as seats in the House and Senate, in November 2004

UNHAPPY RETURNS

AS IF THE ELECTION WEREN'T cruel enough already, here's a footnote that may have escaped some readers: Cynthia McKinney is back. McKinney is the former Georgia representative who earned a measure of fame in 2002 for suggesting that George W. Bush ignored specific forewarning of the September 11 attacks because a war would profit Bush family allies. Prior to that, she was known around Washington for left-wing radicalism and hostility toward Israel. In late 2001, after New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani rejected the donation of a Saudi prince who had offered $10 million to New York's post–September 11 relief efforts in the hope that the United States would "reexamine its policies in the Middle East and adopt a more balanced stance towards the Palestinian cause," McKinney expressed her sympathy for the prince's views as she appealed for him instead to donate the money to poor blacks. McKinney was also one of Washington's finest race-baiters, seeing bigotry in even the most arcane places. For instance, in early 2001, after Republicans on the House International Relations Committee transferred authority over the State Department's budget from the subcommittee on which she sat (and which is chaired by Cuban American Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen), McKinney questioned whether "white men" were intentionally disempowering "minority women."

DAVID COWLES

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Thankfully, McKinney's idiocy finally caught up with her. In a 2002 primary, she was challenged by another African American woman, Denise Majette, a graduate of Yale University and Duke Law School. McKinney, with the support of such American heroes as Louis Farrakhan and Ralph Nader, disgracefully attacked Majette as a tool of pro-Israel whites. (After her defeat, McKinney's father put a finer point on it, telling a reporter that "Jews have bought everybody. Jews. J-E-W-S.")

But perhaps Majette was not as impressive as she seemed. Earlier this year, she bizarrely announced that she was leaving the House to make a long-shot bid for Zell Miller's Senate seat against a popular and well-known Republican congressman, Johnny Isakson. Democrats fretted about what would happen to her House seat. "I would not have taken this step if I were not confident that there would be a candidate who could take on the challenge and [continue] ... the work that we have done in the fourth district," she assured *Roll Call* earlier this year. But, days before Majette's decision, McKinney—now reinvented as a heroic martyr of "the corporate propaganda machine"—had announced her glorious comeback. After prevailing in a July primary, McKinney breezed past her Republican challenger on Election Day and will return to the House in January. Majette, meanwhile, was predictably walloped in a race that was never competitive, quite possibly ending her promising political career. It was that kind of election.

OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS ...

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the publication of *Ester and Ruzya: How My Grandmothers Survived Hitler's War and Stalin's Peace* (Dial Books) by Masha Gessen, a dual memoir of her grandmothers' struggles to make lives for themselves while facing the twentieth century's greatest tyrannies. ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

THE SUNNI PERSECUTION STRATEGY, CONT'D: Reports on Wednesday indicate that U.S.-Allawi forces are in "control" of 70 percent of Falluja. And yet, by every strategic indication, the insurgents are winning the battle. According to an insurgent "commander" using the nom de guerre Abu Khalid, who was quoted in *The New York Times*, the insurgents kept half of their current strength in the city and dispatched the other half outside Falluja. The city's mujahedin leaders are unconcerned about combat losses among the half that stays to fight: "The Americans will raid houses and arrest a lot of people, and this will increase resentment and hatred and give the resistance more support in the city," Abu Khalid told the *Times*. An Iraq-based American military official worried to the *Times*, "If Falluja comes up a 'dry hole' [capturing no prominent insurgents] after all the operations ... it may cause backlash."

According to the Associated Press, insurgents have managed to kill 13 Americans in the last 48 hours outside of Falluja, in addition to a higher number of Iraqi civilians and security forces. Over several hours, significant insurgent attacks have occurred in Tikrit, Baquba, Balad, Karbala, and Baghdad. Perhaps most politically resonant is the kidnapping of Iyad Allawi's relatives, whom insurgents are threatening to behead unless U.S. forces withdraw from Falluja in 48 hours.

Politically, the insurgents have significantly advanced what could be called the Sunni persecution strategy: that is, to gather recruits, material, and political support for the insurgency by aggravating the sense among Sunnis that they have no future in the U.S.-sponsored political process. The only Sunni political party in the Allawi government has quit in protest, and the largest Sunni religious organization has formally called for its adherents to boycott the January elections. One member of the Iraqi Islamic Party who refused to resign his position—and who has since been renounced by the party—explained his decision: "It will be a big mistake not to have the Sunnis' participation in the election. We would have problems for decades to come."

A Shia victory in January's elections sets the stage for pushing the vicious cycle of Sunni alienation and violent resistance forward. That is why attacks have been occurring in Shia areas like Karbala and Najaf and why, except for the occasional outburst by Moqtada Al Sadr, no Shia are coming to the aid of Falluja this time. Much of the Sunni insurgency appears to be figuring that they can win a civil war, and, as such, are looking to start one. That will surely be put to the test if the Shia indeed take formal control of the country in January and view a Sunni insurgency as an existential threat to their long-held, now-realized political aspirations. Shia who won't fight for Iyad Allawi may very well fight for their religious leaders. If so, the violence of 2003 and 2004 might look like an age of serenity by contrast. At that point, the Sunni insurgency may no longer win—but, right now, it shows every sign of getting exactly what it wants.

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

DOES HISTORY SUGGEST BUSH WILL BE MIRED IN SCANDAL?: I'm not sure I entirely buy this November 8 analysis in the *Times*:

> At the same time, Mr. Bush and his advisers know that history holds sober lessons for second-term presidents.
>
> Richard M. Nixon was forced out of office by Watergate. Ronald Reagan had the Iran-contra scandal. And Bill Clinton was impeached because of Monica Lewinsky. If the troubled tenure of Lyndon B. Johnson is added to the list—he won a term of his own after being elevated to the presidency when John F. Kennedy was assassinated—the warning sirens for Mr. Bush are even louder.
>
> "The big danger is one of hubris," said David R. Gergen, a professor of public service at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and a veteran of the Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton White Houses. "There's a tendency after you win your second term to think you're invulnerable. You're not just king of the mountain, you've mastered the mountain. That can often lead to mistakes of excessive pride."

But second-term hubris is not what got Nixon in trouble over Watergate or Clinton in trouble over Lewinsky. Most of the offenses at the center of those scandals were committed during those two presidents' first terms. The real danger for second-term presidents, I think, is that the press gets bored and starts pursuing investigative leads with a little more verve than they might have beforehand. The Bushies obviously know better than anyone else how much they have to worry about.

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It's John Kerry, stupid.

Bad Messenger

BY MARTIN PERETZ

In its January 19 edition, The New Republic endorsed Joe Lieberman for the Democratic presidential nomination. The decision elicited some ridicule, as it was already clear that Lieberman had no chance of winning. But Lieberman had stood with us on critical issues—the Gulf war, Bosnia, Hollywood's toxic influence on our children, breaking the grip of the teachers' unions on educational policy—and so we stood with him. Nonetheless, Howard Dean, Richard Gephardt, Wesley Clark, and John Edwards had at least one supporter among the magazine's editorial board and each was lauded, more or less, in a signed article by a different editor in the same issue.

Dean was then the front-runner. But, as many people recognized at the time, he was an ideological and temperamental disaster of McGovernite proportions. He would have won Washington, D.C., and maybe Vermont, but lost virtually everywhere else, perhaps including Massachusetts.

Gephardt was a sensible legislator and surprisingly strong on foreign policy. Still, he didn't evoke the kind of enthusiasm that, alas, is required in a modern campaign. Clark was the fashion for a moment (at least in Manhattan and Hollywood) but quickly showed his lack of familiarity with national issues. Edwards failed to meet electoral expectations. Still, his winning personality won him the vice-presidential nomination and made him a lively contrast to the party's stiff and dour presidential designee.

Dennis Kucinich made Dean look moderate. Carol Moseley Braun—who proved calm and even sensible in the debates—partially redeemed a Senate career stained by scandal and a Jesse Jackson–esque affinity for African tyrants. Al Sharpton was the scandal of the campaign. A racist charlatan, he had broadcast Tawana Brawley's libels against conscientious law-enforcement officers and fomented bitter racial conflicts—pitting blacks against Jews in Harlem and Crown Heights, Koreans in Brooklyn, and whites throughout New York. Had he been Caucasian, he would have been treated like David Duke. But John Kerry gave him a prized speaking spot at the party's Boston convention nonetheless and, later on, a grandiloquent title and some flying-around money to serve as the candidate's surrogate. (Not that it did Kerry any good—Sharpton hadn't even won the black vote in the primaries. The African American electorate, thank goodness, no longer has any use for such charlatans.) No editor favored any of these marginal candidates, and none supported Kerry, either. (Some in the Kerry campaign incorrectly blamed me for this. But then, Kerry himself also seems to have thought me decisive in keeping Al Gore from choosing him as vice president in 2000, which was also untrue.)

Still, in the end, the nomination fell to Kerry, who, as I expected all along, duly lost the election to George W. Bush. Kerry (assisted by genius advisers like Bob Shrum and John Sasso) underperformed—in comparison with both Gore and with his own expectations—with virtually every demographic group he had targeted: youth, women, Latinos, African Americans, Catholics, Jews. The big money behind the Democratic campaign—roughly $100 million ploughed into 527 committees by three of the wealthiest men in America—was not enough. The convention had been an exercise in false enthusiasm, and the campaign was an exercise in failed enthusiasm.

I actually believe that, had Lieberman won the nomination, he would have won the election. I think Gore would have as well. Notwithstanding his Iraq position, with which I disagree, Gore is not a foreign policy patsy, as he showed during the Clinton administration. Like Lieberman, people know where he stands—in the solid center.

Tuesday's *Boston Globe* brings two pieces of chilling news. Apparently, Howard Dean is contemplating a bid for chairman of the Democratic National Committee. It almost makes you want Terry McAuliffe to stay. The second item was a run-on interview with Kerry's brother, Cameron, who revealed that John just might run for president again and that, in any case, "he's going to ... be a voice for the 55 million people who voted for him." Another aide confided that Kerry "has been working the phones like crazy." But Kerry is *not* the voice of 55 million people, or even the 55.9 million people who voted for him. It was these people's slightly hysterical antagonism to Bush that brought them (reluctantly) to Kerry rather than anything intrinsic to Kerry himself. In any event, Bush won't be around in 2008, so disdain and hate will no longer produce Democratic votes.

I've known John Kerry for 34 years. We met in the peace movement, and I was present in 1970 when a huge convention of peaceniks rejected him as their candidate in a primary race against Philip Philbin, a Democratic hack and hawk who, through seniority, was then second in command of the House Armed Services Committee. The caucus instead nominated Father Robert Drinan, dean of Boston College Law School, who won the seat and held it for five terms, until Pope John Paul II made him resign.

Even then, no one seemed to like Kerry. (The only person I've known who really does is David Thorne, the brother of his first wife and his classmate at Yale.) Kerry's initial defeats (he also lost a race for Massachusetts' fifth congressional district in 1972) did not deflect him from his ambitions, but he deferred them to attend BC Law School and then work as a prosecutor. He got back into politics in 1982, with his election as Michael Dukakis's lieutenant governor, where his own unpleasantness was somewhat shielded by that of his boss.

He was first elected to the Senate in 1984, the same year

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as Al Gore. Something demonic in Kerry persuaded him to belittle Gore whenever we met. As their first term started, Kerry boasted to me that he had beaten out Gore for a coveted seat on the Foreign Relations Committee, while Gore had to content himself with Armed Services. But it was the latter committee that went on to do much of the heavy lifting of the next two decades, while J. William Fulbright's old Foreign Relations Committee went into a steep decline. Kerry also became a member of the Intelligence Committee, whose public meetings he attended sparingly and—if one judges from his book *The New War*—from which he learned little about the terrorist threat that he described so murkily in the last campaign. By contrast, Gore created a real record for himself: on the environment; the Internet; arms control; and nuclear strategy, where he introduced the revolutionary idea of the single-warhead missile.

Today, Democrats are overcome with despair. And I do not doubt that Bush's second term will have its abuses and its nastiness. But they should not delude themselves: John Kerry would not have been a good president; he might even have been a dangerously bad one. Next time, Democrats need to nominate not merely a candidate who they imagine can win but a candidate who deserves to. ■

Gay marriage isn't political death.

Uncivil Union

BY ANDREW SULLIVAN

IT WOULD BE hard to understate the pervasive despair that gripped gay Americans as the results of November 2 began to trickle and then flood into their consciousness. With the victory of eleven state amendments banning relationship rights, and with the religious right exultant that its opposition to homosexuality had brought an already anti-gay administration to power with a new mandate, the mood tipped close to dread. The playwright Larry Kramer, with his usual gift for moderation, told a packed house in downtown Manhattan on Sunday night, "I hope we all realize that, as of November 2, gay rights are officially dead. And that, from here on, we are going to be led even closer to the guillotine." He was not the only one feeling that way.

For their part, the Democrats also seemed poised to blame their small but decisive loss on the push for equal marriage rights. Senator Dianne Feinstein proclaimed that the movement had gone "too far too fast." Representative Barney Frank pinned responsibility on the shoulders of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, arguing that his extralegal sanctioning of marriages for gay couples had unleashed a backlash that had swept George W. Bush back to power. That was the sentiment, and that was the spin. In the immediate aftermath of the election, with Bill Bennett calling the result a mandate for a new culture war, it was very difficult to resist.

But resist it we should, not least because it is morally cowardly. We should also resist it because it is untrue. By any objective measure, the civil rights movement of this generation has accomplished more in a short time than any civil rights movement before it. Yes, fear of homosexuality and the apocalyptic rhetoric of some religious right leaders propelled some rural and suburban voters to the polls. Yes, the way in which homosexuality was deployed as an issue by a whole array of Republican candidates was obvious and, at times, repulsive. In Ohio, the critical state, that may have made a difference. But, nationally, the trend is toward approval of gay unions, not away from it—and that can help Democrats, provided they don't shy away from their convictions.

TO BE SURE, 22 percent of the electorate said moral values was their prime concern. But "moral values" encompass not only marriage rights, but also abortion rights, divorce rates, presidential faith, and the powerful symbolism of tradition in a time of great danger and insecurity. The category has long been picked by voters in exit polls. In 1992, if you add the issues of abortion and family values together, the percentage claiming their vote was based on "moral values" was 27 percent. In 1996, when voters could pick two categories of concern to them, it soared to 49 percent. In 2000, it was again 49 percent, in part a reflection of Bill Clinton's character. Broad moral issues have long been salient in U.S. elections. This year was no different.

There were anti–gay union ballots in three swing states. Kerry won two of them. In eight out of eleven states with gay-union amendments, the increase in Bush's share of the vote compared with 2000 lagged behind the increase in his share of the national vote. Moreover, the broader climate showed remarkable acceptance of the union rights of gay couples. According to the exit polls, a full 62 percent of Americans favor either full marriage rights or civil unions for gay couples. Only 35 percent want what eight state amendments and the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) promise: no legal protections whatsoever. In the week before the election, the president himself came out in favor of civil unions.

When you look at the context, what is striking is how weak the backlash was, not how strong. Marriage rights for gays were unheard of two decades ago. Only an eleven-year span marks the length of time since the first court decision for marriage equality came down in Hawaii. That effort failed, of course. Actual marriage equality in America has been around for a mere six months. *Six months*. Backlash is not a rarity in civil rights movements. It is the norm. If the backlash against equal marriage rights extends to only eleven state bans a mere six months after the critical breakthrough, then the real story is how quickly those rights have become a part of the landscape, not the reverse. In Congress, the FMA

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fizzled. In Massachusetts, the epicenter of the struggle, the legislature tilted on November 2 toward those who favored marriage equality, rather than toward those who voted against it. In California, the civil unions that will come into effect next year as a result of legislation will carry with them almost all the rights that the state can apply to same-sex relationships, and the Republican governor has endorsed them.

Not only is the movement for marriage equality not on the brink of reversal, it is poised to grow stronger. The younger generation supports gay unions in far higher numbers than any other age group—and is more likely to vote Democratic. Gay rights, in other words, (as opposed to, say, Social Security) is one issue on which Democrats actually have a position that will become more popular in the years ahead. Bush understands this. And that is why the ugly appeal to homophobia was conducted at the grassroots level and under the national radar and why Bush's own rhetoric rarely diverged from positive comments about marriage to negative ones about gays or gay couples.

How do Democrats successfully deal with this issue? First, they must assert the federalist nature of the problem. In a country where San Francisco exists as well as Mobile, Alabama, a single national rule on this contentious issue can only provoke social conflict of the deepest kind. That means Democrats should oppose legalizing marriage rights nationally as strongly as they oppose banning them nationally. Let each state decide. That means opposing the FMA as an abuse of the U.S. Constitution and an infringement on states' rights (the FMA would void Massachusetts' marriages and Vermont's civil unions). This federalist point is not a liberal argument. It's a conservative one—and it will divide Republicans as effectively as it will unite Democrats.

Secondly, the Democrats should be relentless in exposing the real agenda of the religious right. That agenda is not about marriage. It is about stripping gay couples of all legal protections for their relationships. Eight of the state amendments that just passed do exactly that. So does the FMA, in banning not just marriage for gay couples but all of the "legal incidents" that go with it. That agenda is a national loser for the Republicans, which is why they never mention it, and even deny it outright. They must not be allowed to get away with it any longer. The extremism of the FMA needs to be broadcast from the rooftops. If it is, it will fail.

Lastly, the Democrats need to get over their squeamishness and defensiveness on this issue. The movement for equal marriage rights is, in fact, a centrist issue, and should be framed as such. Instead of speaking of it nervously as a matter of ending discrimination and implying that all opponents are somehow prejudiced, Democrats need to use the positive language of faith and family to defend the reform. It should be framed as a way to bring all members of the family into the unifying institution of marriage; it must be spoken of as an issue that upholds responsibility and fidelity. The very existence of gay people in every state and every city and every family in this country should always be mentioned. Bush is able to get away with his policies precisely because he never mentions the actual human beings they wound and marginalize. Democrats and inclusive Republicans must keep mentioning these people—their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. If they do, the inherent decency of the American people will win out.

This country is not a repository of bigotry. At its heart, America is a compassionate, inclusive place. But Americans need to hear the case for gay inclusion clearly and calmly and with conviction. That means resisting the easy option of proclaiming the heartland a bunch of rubes and morons, and it must mean a greater commitment by gay people and their families to explaining their own lives. It means less reliance on courts and more reliance on democratic persuasion. Every movement that has fought for those goals in this manner has won in the end in America. It will happen again. And it will happen sooner than anyone now thinks. ■

God's second term.
The Elect

BY LEON WIESELTIER

Perhaps the most odious feature of contemporary conservatism is its equation of success with virtue. In the realm of economics, this long ago resulted in the strange belief in the moral superiority of the wealthy, a vulgar Calvinism according to which money is a proof of merit and riches are a mark of righteousness. How else is wealth acquired in America, after all, except justly? And now, in the aftermath of the election, the equation of success and virtue, the conflation of outer worth with inner worth, has been extended to the realm of politics. We are instructed that the Republicans won because they have "values" and the Democrats lost because they do not have "values." (Or quantitatively speaking, 59.5 million Americans have "values" and 55.9 million Americans do not have "values.") Winners are good, losers are bad.

It is not the triumphalism of the Republicans that is so distasteful (victory indeed is theirs), it is the sanctimony; and this is owed to a further refinement of the Republican worldview, according to which moral values are finally religious values. It is philosophically and historically obtuse, of course, to think that morality cannot exist without religion, or that immorality cannot exist with religion; but for the Republicans "values" are the entailments of "faith." The good are with God, the bad are without God. And since winners are good and losers are bad, it follows that the winners are with God and the losers are without God. What clarity!

In the days after the election, the losers seemed to be

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falling for the winners' clarity. Democrats, it was everywhere observed, are catastrophically wanting in "respect" for American believers. They must immediately "learn to talk about" moral questions and "learn to talk to" religious people. Suddenly the most significant obstacle to political power in America is secularism. It is certainly the case that John Kerry was not exactly a man with the common touch; and that liberals more generally have trouble imagining common people except as poor people. For this reason, liberals have once again been harshly taught that *homo economicus*—more concretely, *homo Shrumicus*—is a fiction. Money is often not the most important thing in the world for poor people, perhaps because they have so little of it. They do not define themselves only, or mainly, by what they lack; whereas they are rich in loves and principles, and so the communal and national and cultural and spiritual dimensions of their identity may loom larger than the economic dimension. (The Bush administration has demonstrated, by contrast, that economic man is more likely to be found among the wealthy, for whom money often does seem to be the most important thing in the world, perhaps because they have so much of it.) So liberals must indeed develop a fuller and more vivid comprehension of the Americans whom they rightly wish to help; but that is all the intellectual contrition that they need muster. For they have values even when they do not have faith; and they should not contrive to have faith so as to gain values, unless they wish to degrade faith by promoting it mainly for its political utility, as some conservatives do.

I WILL NOT be God-whipped. For a start, it is not at all clear that the "values" analysis of George W. Bush's reelection is correct—my splendidly unquantified suspicion is that he owed his majority to the tiresomely predictable failure of John Kerry to persuade 3.6 million people that he would unambiguously commit American power to the cause of American security—even if the cunning referenda on gay marriage did bring more conservative voters to the polls. (If this were 1960, Karl Rove would have arranged referenda on segregation.) Moreover, the "faith" that is being praised as the road to political salvation, the Bush ideal of religion, is a zealous ignorance, a complacent renunciation of proof and evidence and logic and argument, as if the techniques of reason were merely liberal tools. A few weeks before the election David Brooks explained to his readers that Republicans and Democrats have different notions of leadership. Republicans admire "straight-talking men of faith," whereas Democrats prefer leaders who are "knowledgeable and thoughtful." Brooks was serenely unaware of what a damning admission he had made. There is no reason why liberals, even in defeat, should entertain such a surrender of intelligence.

The faith fetish, the belief in belief, is an insult not only to the mind, but also to the soul. For there are many varieties of faith, and the "faith" of the Republicans, which does not grasp the old distinction between fideism and faith, represents only one of those varieties. Not all religion in America is as superstitious and chiliastic and emotional and dogmatic and political as this. And not all religion in America is as Christian as this. When the spokesmen for Bush's holy base call for the restoration of religion to a central position in public life—for the repeal of the grand tradition of mutually beneficial separation that began with Roger Williams's heroic alienation from the theocracy of Massachusetts—they are usually calling for the restoration of *their* religion.

Consider the bioethical controversies. In the discussion of stem-cell research, reproductive technologies, birth control, and abortion, politics has collided, and colluded, with theology. Liberals are regularly castigated for insensitivity to religion when they articulate their views about the proper use of these scientific powers. But they are not being insensitive to religion. They are being insensitive to Catholic and evangelical Christian religion. It happens that the Jewish understanding of the sanctity of life leads Jewish law to rule much differently, and much more "liberally," in all these matters. Why, then, are so many conservatives insensitive to my religion? The question answers itself. They have no choice. They believe what they believe. They do not mean to wound me; but all the ecumenical talk about respect, and all the political talk about healing, cannot dissuade them from their consciences. I understand this. I expect them to think as they think. But they had better understand this, too. I think as I think. Like them, I cannot be dissuaded from my conscience. I intend no disrespect, but I also intend no phony respect: Like them, I believe that on certain fundamental issues facing American society, those who think as I think are right and those who think as they think are wrong. The liberal conscience is not a human failing. It is another kind of conscience. It has reasons. It is a thing of principle, not a thing of taste. The religious right complains of liberal condescension, and often properly; but then it condescends to liberalism by reducing it to class or to culture, and by regarding it not as a moral creed but as a moral corruption. The offense that religious conservatives regularly take from secular liberals is a little ridiculous. Why do they care so much about our disapproval? They are also in the business of disapproval. The truth is that this kind of conservatism is sustained by its feeling of victimization. Grievance makes it glad. It allows the right to combine the power of a majority with the pity of a minority.

WHEN I COMPLAIN about the scanting of my religion in the bioethical debate, I am not being altogether serious. Obviously I do not expect Congress to act on the sanctity of Judaism when it makes laws about stem-cell research or abortion. This is not only because Judaism has too few adherents to carry the day. It is not the politics of a democracy, but the philosophy of a democracy, that requires me to accept these limitations upon the reach of my faith. For my faith is *my* faith, even if I believe it to be universally true. The reasons of my religion cannot compel the assent of people who do not share my religion. They have the reasons of their religion, which cannot compel my assent. That the Pope, or

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some distinguished evangelical divine, holds a certain view is a matter of indifference to me. The Pope may be right and he may be wrong. I may be persuaded of his view, but not because of his authority. I need to be given arguments that I may rationally consider. (I harbor the same skepticism—the same liberalism—about authority in my own tradition. Reason is not an instrument for criticizing other people's religion.) This is what Adam Michnik meant when he wickedly remarked, in support of the American war against Saddam Hussein, that if Jesus is telling Bush what to do, He is giving him some very good advice.

John Kerry, and his recreational complexity, made the simplicity of George W. Bush look like clarity. This clarity seems perfectly consistent with the president's religiosity; but in fact the relation of religious faith and political clarity is much less edifying and much more onerous. The belief in God does not guarantee the knowledge of God's wishes. This is the most elementary lesson of the history of religious faith. The believer lives in the darkness more than he lives in the light. He does not wallow in God's guidance, he thirsts for it. And when God's guidance comes, it does not take the form of policy recommendations, unless he has created his God in the image of his desire. What deity is this, that has opinions about preemption and taxation and Quentin Tarantino? In this regard, there is no more ringing refutation of the religion of George W. Bush than the religion of Abraham Lincoln. "Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other," Lincoln proclaimed at the beginning of his second term, and in the middle of a war. "The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully." For Lincoln, his party was not God's party; or rather, the other party was as much God's party as his party was. And he explained this repudiation of human certainty this way: "The Almighty has his own purposes." He did not know what they were, he knew only that they were. Beware the politicians, and the politics, that know more. ■

A Democratic ownership agenda.

Own Up

BY ELIOT SPITZER

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION is over and "values" won. Political observers seem united on this essential point—the re-election of George W. Bush was an affirmation of Republicans and their values and a repudiation of Democrats, who apparently lack them. How could it come to this? Through the years, we have always prided ourselves on being champions of the values that working people and the electorate care about most: fairness, opportunity, inclusion, and responsibility. But, this time around, we didn't frame our message on these ideals persuasively enough. Instead, Bush's campaign captured and co-opted the value mantle and made it seem like he stood for everything that is good in the United States and that Democrats, in comparison, stood for nothing.

This never should have happened. And it would not have, had Democrats done a better job of challenging and unmasking Republican claims.

CONSIDER THE "Ownership Society," a term Republicans use to describe their vision of the American dream—an environment where any American, no matter his or her station, can compete and achieve financial success, security, and a lasting stake in their community, all by dint of hard work. So integral to Republican political imagery are these phrases that it is hard for some voters to imagine that a Democrat can even say them, much less believe in them.

But, even as Republicans invoke pleasant-sounding slogans at every turn, they pursue policies that undermine the values they claim to represent. Take the following three recent scandals: conflicts of interest among Wall Street analysts, who duped small investors with tainted research; predatory lending, which imposed illegal and unconscionable mortgages on homeowners; and illegal practices of mutual-fund traders, who skimmed billions from people saving for their kids' college tuitions and their own retirements. In each of these situations, the Bush administration and congressional Republicans not only impeded the investigations but actually proposed legislation that would preempt the ability of state regulators to combat the problems.

Through these and other actions, the Ownership Society is revealed as an empty slogan that should have been turned against the Republicans. Some might say that this is an unduly negative approach, certain to turn off voters. I disagree. Highlighting the disconnect between the Republicans' sound bites and the alarming reality of their policies is fair game. And it would have been an even more effective strategy if coupled with a passionate articulation of our commitment to fairness and equal access to the American dream.

Democrats have to explain why the government must act when the markets are manipulated and working people are harmed. Teddy Roosevelt understood this nearly a century ago. His trust-busting and environmental activism were meant both to protect citizens and to restore the integrity of the markets. He said, "We demand that big business give people a square deal; in return, we must insist that, when anyone engaged in big business honestly endeavors to do right, he shall himself be given a square deal."

Instead of fighting for a square deal for all, Republicans today place corporate interests ahead of consumer interests. When regulators, such as those in my office, try to call

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them on their cronyism, they portray our efforts as bureaucratic meddling in free markets. But we did not investigate Wall Street because we were troubled by large institutions making a lot of money; we took action to stop a blatant fraud that was ripping off small investors. We sought to right the wrong, reestablishing the level playing field that is a prerequisite to market competition and ensuring that every investor enjoys the same opportunity to profit that the insiders have.

Similarly, we did not ask the courts to stop predatory mortgage lending because we begrudge lenders an appropriate rate of return. We did so because what was happening to borrowers was illegal and wrong and needed to be stopped so that people could, in fact, have a true ownership stake in society. We didn't investigate mutual-fund companies because of a desire to increase government regulation. We did it to stop a scam that allowed a favored few insiders to benefit at the expense of all other investors.

The Bush administration, in the name of free markets, has allowed business to take advantage of the small investor, victimizing those who want to own a piece of the U.S. economy. The scandals involving Wall Street analysts, banking, and mutual funds all demonstrated the Republicans' failure to protect those Americans who want to play their part in the Ownership Society.

Now Republicans want to privatize Social Security—leaving those saving for retirement at the mercy of a system they have failed miserably to police. If Social Security had been privatized during the last several years, retirees on fixed incomes would have lost billions more to scams.

Fortunately for millions of small investors, Democrats are watching out for them. Democrats have a proud history of stepping in, not to put the brakes on business but to protect small investors and ensure that the playing field is level for every American.

Here's a fact almost no one knows: In 2003, when my office uncovered the mutual-fund scandal, outrage was easy to find, but few in political office stepped up to take on the mutual-fund industry, which is one of the largest donors to federal campaigns. The president failed to support any meaningful reforms. Most in Congress ran the other way. There was, however, one exception to the general inertia. The strongest bill—and, indeed, one of the only bills—to reform the mutual-fund industry was introduced by Senator John Kerry. That is one of the reasons I supported him early in his campaign. It is too bad voters didn't hear the story about how our Democratic candidate was actually one of the few in government who stood up to defend their stake in an Ownership Society.

With our values and policies, Democrats have been on the right track for a long time. We champion the ideals held most dear by working families, but we simply didn't articulate campaign issues in the context of those ideals. Instead, we let the Republicans employ wedge issues like gay marriage that diverted attention from their failed domestic policies.

We can't repeat these mistakes in 2008. Starting today, our party must focus on all the difficulties that working people face—from financial scams to job security to health insurance, from day care for our kids to nursing homes for our parents, from the price of gas to the increasing cost of college tuition, from the safety and security of our neighborhoods to the health of the environment. We must address these issues not as antiseptic policy points but as elements of a living mosaic that, together, form a society that rewards hard work and integrity. Our policies and plans will gain traction with the public when we frame them as a reflection of the core values we believe in. ■

How FDR spoke about values.

Renewed Deal

BY ANDREI CHERNY

On February 24, 2004, as John Kerry was winning another set of primaries on his way to becoming the Democratic nominee, George W. Bush went to the Roosevelt Room in the White House to announce to the nation that "the defense of marriage requires a constitutional amendment."

During this same period, Kerry's campaign was putting together the building blocks of his general-election message strategy. It was proposed that Kerry not cede marriage and family to the Republicans but rather that he unveil and run on an unabashedly "pro–family values agenda." By laying claim to this political terrain, Kerry could argue that the real threat to the American family was not gay marriage, which—whatever one's opinion about it—only affects a relatively tiny number of couples, but rather the daily strains affecting all couples and families. It would enable him to discuss proposals like expanding health insurance not only through an economic prism, but as ways to support basic values. At the same time, it would provide a rubric for speaking about ideas that would help families succeed and parents raise their children, such as after-school care and paid family and medical leave. Finally, it would send a powerful—and accurate—signal that he personally believed in family values and sought to defend them.

The idea was rejected. The decision was made that it was

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"unnecessary" for Kerry to talk about marriage and family values since Bush's anti-gay-marriage amendment was "already backfiring" by turning away swing voters with its divisiveness and supposedly upsetting the conservative base with its infringement on states' rights.

But exit polls in swing states indicated the extent to which moral and values issues influenced voters. While some, in the days after Kerry's loss, have argued that the "values" phrase in exit polls served as an overly broad catchall, the fact that voters who selected it as their most important issue went overwhelmingly for Bush (80 to 18 percent) indicates that it was a phrase with some meaning.

The question of that meaning has occupied Democrats' thoughts since Election Day—and will continue to in the months ahead. That is necessary. What is not necessary is that Democrats walk away from their core beliefs in tolerance and freedom to assuage those who disagree. Aside from the fact that Democrats cannot convince the country that they stand for something by compromising on their convictions, there is no political imperative for such a compromise. The same Election Day exit polls indicated that 55 percent of voters believe abortion should be "always" or "mostly" legal, and 60 percent of voters supported either gay marriage or civil unions.

Democrats need not—and should not—adopt the agenda of social conservatives, but we need to do a better job of speaking to the moral and spiritual yearnings that have always characterized the American experience. Since Election Day, many Democrats have griped about the fact that, in supporting Bush, so many middle-class voters failed to vote in their economic self-interest. That is entirely true—and completely beside the point. Americans do not enter the voting booth in the manner of accountants calculating take-home income. They have historically voted on hopes and resentments—slavery and civil rights, freemasonry and free love—that have nothing to do with the bottom line. The values inculcated by family and community—such as hard work, personal responsibility, patriotism, faith, and integrity—are not only religious in origin. Yet they are part of the nation's civic creed, and Republicans can no longer be allowed to have a near-monopoly in running on them.

Once, Democrats did talk about their vision in explicitly moral terms. In accepting the Democratic nomination in 1932, during the massive unemployment of the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt pledged to "put men to work," not just because it would bring them "security for themselves and for their wives and children," but because of the "moral and spiritual values that go with" work. The following year, in his inaugural address, Roosevelt told the nation it must "face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern performance of duty by old and young alike." He appealed not only to the values of Americans' pocketbooks, but also to those in their prayer books.

But somewhere in the "I'm OK, You're OK" 1970s and the "Me Decade" 1980s, many Democrats became uncomfortable passing judgment and issuing calls to action. The notion of politician as moral leader became subsumed by politician as wonk, proposing technocratic policies to address every problem. In 1992, Bill Clinton self-consciously rejected that idea and sought both to call on Americans' better angels and to call wrongdoers onto the carpet. Whereas Walter Mondale never used the word "responsibility" in his nomination acceptance address, Clinton used it seven times. In setting forth the ideas behind his candidacy in his first "New Covenant" address in October 1991, he said that, under Republican rule, the middle class had seen not only "their economic interests ignored" but "their values literally ground into the ground." He said that, under Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, "Responsibility went unrewarded, and so did hard work." He declared that "responsibility is for everybody," and, during his campaign, he showed Americans that he actually believed it. In April 1992, he went to Wharton Business School—the home of junk bonds—and told students and faculty that their school was "a powerful symbol of where our country went wrong in the 1980s." In June 1992, more famously, he went to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and decried the rapper Sister Souljah's call for killing "white people."

This month's election results should serve as a powerful reminder to Democrats of the need to set forth their vision in starkly moral terms, to address Americans' longing for a sense of spirituality and community. Most people are not religious right-wingers, but most people are religious. Democrats need to do a better job of listening and speaking to them in explicitly moral and spiritual terms.

The first step for Democrats in the months and years to come is to stop thinking of "values" as a discrete topic—with an encomium to the concept shoehorned into a speech or a set of policies listed alongside health care and education on a candidate's homepage. Instead, just as Bush sold his policies on Iraq and tax cuts, as well as abortion, through the prism of values, Democrats need to see values as an overarching umbrella for their agenda.

Democrats should hold Americans to an ethic of personal responsibility; a demand for moral decency that stretches from crooked CEOs to common criminals. Think of the way most Democrats discussed the Enron scandal: with a combination of a lawyerly denunciation of financial impropriety and a social worker's concern for the livelihoods of the harmed workers. Then consider how Roosevelt spoke of an earlier round of corporate misconduct: "[T]here must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance; without them it cannot live." It is the thunder of a

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prophet. In 2004, Democrats should have decried the values of WorldCom with the same passion that some Republicans criticized the values embodied by "Will & Grace."

In fact, discussing economic issues in the context of values is the rule, not the exception, in U.S. history. Visiting the United States in 1889, Rudyard Kipling noticed that Americans felt extremely strongly about the tariff—especially if they were Democrats and especially if they were drunk. Barroom boozers argued about import duties not because of a deeply held Ricardian faith in free trade, but because of a conviction that the tariff was fundamentally unfair to average workers while favoring those who lazed about in great mansions.

This popular disgust with the protective tariff was fueled not by class resentments but by irritation at those who violated the civic faith in hard work. The same notion animated John Edwards's discussions of "wealth versus work" in the primary campaign. And, despite claims among some pundits that Kerry resorted to old-fashioned populist appeals in order to win the primaries, he in fact aimed for what might be called "values-oriented populism"; not "the people versus the powerful," but the favoring of "those who are doing the right thing over those who are doing wrong to their employees, their companies, or their country."

It is not just on economic issues that Democrats need to find their moral voice. Environmental degradation is a sin against nature's God—and we should not hesitate to say so. Persistent poverty among children and working parents is a moral outrage—and we should be prepared to do something bold about it. And if, on the Sunday after the election, Karl Rove can go on "Meet the Press" and call global AIDS a values issue for the Republican base, then surely Democrats can say the same.

MANY AMERICANS SEE Democrats as part of the culturally different "other" that Republicans have had so much fun and success castigating since the late '60s. This is, in large measure, due to overt GOP campaign ploys. But Democrats too often have seen values, such as work, family, responsibility, and faith, as Republican buzzwords rather than as part of their own party's DNA.

Democrats need to speak directly to the yearning that Americans feel for a sense of spiritual fulfillment and community. There is a natural reticence to do so. The separation of church and state is well-enshrined and important. A community, fully realized, can be stifling. A community involves a set of demands we make of one another as citizens. When these sometimes subtle obligations become too harsh or demanding—when there is pressure to dress the same way or to worship the same God—they create authoritarianism or conformity. Yet, without these obligations, we witness the very atomization of American life and civic culture that so many voters fear.

The sociologist Alan Wolfe has written of "top-down" and "bottom-up" cultural issues. Republicans prey on voters' fears with top-down issues—such as gay marriage—hot buttons and wedges that get partisans' blood boiling on both sides of the aisle. In contrast, the bottom-up issues are the ones that actually affect Americans on a daily basis. These include the difficulties faced by parents trying to balance work and family and the coarsening of a popular culture that often degrades women and makes it difficult to raise honorable, decent children. It is on these issues that Democrats should speak out and act. By strengthening the hand of community institutions, by insisting on a widespread spirit of national service, by standing proudly on the side of parents struggling to raise their children, Democrats will not only win over the "values voters," they can strengthen the moral fabric of the country they seek to lead. ■

Campaign Journal

Bad Message

BY RYAN LIZZA

LAST SATURDAY NIGHT at H_2O, a waterfront nightclub in southwest Washington, the Kerry campaign assembled for a final evening of drinking. To everyone's surprise, John Kerry himself flew down from Boston to attend the festivities. Trying to buck up his demoralized troops, the ex-candidate gave a short speech about how much his team had accomplished. "People are going to try to rewrite history and say we didn't have a message in this campaign," Kerry told his staff, according to one Democratic strategist. "And, let me tell you, the message never changed. The message we had in the final days of the campaign was the same as the one we had in the primaries." That was news to some of the boozy Kerry revelers. "Everyone in that room was on edge because everyone wanted to know: What was that message?" says the strategist.

It's that time again for Democrats. Kerry aides and party strategists have thrown themselves into their quadrennial post-campaign ritual of recriminations. Old scabs are being picked. Scores are being settled. Clintonites point fingers at the Kennedy wing. Longtime Kerry aides throw accusations of disloyalty at the Clintonites. Staffers from the Democratic National Committee lob bombs at staffers from the campaign. Policy wonks gripe about inept political consultants. Kerry aides who traveled on the campaign plane snipe at the aides who were based in Washington. Democrats, out of power and out of jobs, are doing what they do best: turning on one another.

The largest caucus of recriminators, one that spans ideological boundaries and includes critics from every corner of the party, argues that Kerry failed to offer a compelling

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message. As Kerry seemed to realize in his speech Saturday night, the no-message critique is congealing into conventional wisdom. I heard it in every conceivable permutation from almost everyone I interviewed. "I don't know that we ever knew what it was we were saying about George W. Bush," says one senior member of the team, whose job it was to come up with a message about Bush. It was a problem that plagued the campaign as soon as they stumbled, penniless, from the primaries into the general election. "When we got into the general, nobody knew how to go against Bush," says a senior campaign official. "[Senior adviser Bob] Shrum and [pollster Mark] Mellman built this strategy against Bush, 'Stronger at home, respected in the world.' What does that mean? We never even had strategy memos." By the fall, things were no better. "If there was a clear message in September about why you elect Kerry and defeat Bush, most of the people in the campaign were unaware of it," says one senior strategist hired late in the campaign.

The lack of message clarity hurt morale and sapped support for Kerry among his own people. "One thing I would always tell people is that I don't know shit about John Kerry," says a campaign official. "I had an opportunity to work on his campaign last December and I said, 'Well, I don't really know that guy.' I still don't. I don't know what he stood for, other than an alternative to George Bush." That Kerry lacked a clear message isn't just a convenient postelection critique. It was a mantra during the campaign. Says a junior staffer, "I remember one day [Joe] Lockhart saying, after watching the evening news, 'We have no message.' " It didn't help that the Bush team was extremely effective in pushing its own message. "I don't think we ever came up with a frame to define Bush in the way they did with Kerry," says a senior official. "They woke up every day and said, 'We're going to call John Kerry a flip-flopper.' We did not wake up every day and call Bush 'X.' We never gave voters a positive reason to vote for Kerry."

THE LACK OF message was made worse by the failure to articulate a compelling narrative. "People had a story about George Bush," says a senior Kerry adviser. "The story was he was the accidental president who was transformed by 9/11 into a strong and serious leader. That kind of story matters to people." Instead of a story, aides confess, the Kerry campaign had a laundry list of policy proposals, or, in the words of James Carville, a litany rather than a narrative. "The human mind revolves around a story," says Carville. "Churches have litanies. Religions have a narrative. ... It's the way we think. But we're selling a set of issue positions. The same thing always comes back: People always like our positions on the issues, and we always lose."

Aides complain that the litany of issues filled the message vacuum. Inside the campaign, the message was known as JHOS (pronounced "jay-hose"), which stood for jobs, health care, oil, and security. "JHOS," says a senior policy adviser, despondently. "That was our message. It was JHOS. That was literally our message. And, by the way, someone made millions of dollars to come up with that." That someone would be the political consulting firm Shrum, Devine, and Donilon, which is now receiving the brunt of criticism from demoralized staffers. The problem, aides say, is the lack of imagination Shrum and his colleagues exhibited. One common complaint is that they were slaves to polling data and used the research in a ridiculously literal way. Says a senior aide, "When you ask people, 'What is the most important issue?' and they say prescription drugs, [the consultants] say, 'Well, if we run on prescription drugs, we'll win.' " One aide repeatedly pressed Kerry to give a speech about welfare reform, since he had voted for Bill Clinton's bill in 1996. The idea was rebuffed because welfare didn't show up in polling as a key issue for voters. "It's never going to be the top issue," the aide complains. "If you call me on the phone, I'm not going to say that. But, if I hear you talk about welfare reform, it tells me something about your underlying character." There seemed to be an insurmountable gulf between the consultants, at their best running issue-based Senate campaigns, and the other staffers, who pressed for Kerry to explain the values he would bring to office rather than just his specific proposals. "Things became increasingly programmatic rather than values-based," says a senior adviser. "We were talking more and more about the specifics of our plan rather than the principles John Kerry would bring to bear in making those decisions."

Shrum, who has a fine record of electing Democratic senators from blue states but who has now worked on eight losing presidential campaigns, is getting blamed the most for this strategy. Even after the loss, he seemed stuck on JHOS. "I think partly or primarily because of events, the case Kerry was making on health care, the economy, and energy was not heard as clearly as it could have been or should have been," he told me before flying off to Tuscany for vacation. When another reporter asked Shrum what he thought the best TV ad of the campaign was, he said, "I think the 527 ads in the spring on prescription drugs were pretty effective."

In addition to JHOS, Shrum is also taking a beating for the decision not to attack Bush. The swing voters in the focus groups said they didn't want to see attack ads, so the campaign dutifully obeyed. "There was a belief within the campaign that you did not need, fundamentally, to raise these questions about Bush," says one of the architects of the campaign's strategy. "It was much more about John Kerry and filling in the picture on John Kerry and making him an acceptable alternative." One of Kerry's closest aides says, "I absolutely think the lack of negative campaigning killed us." Aides argue that the absence of a negative case against Bush led directly to the absence of a coherent message overall. "The whole strategy was based on polling," says one of Kerry's senior advisers. "Mark Mellman always focused on swing voters. You've got to start making the case for change, but we were never allowed to do that because it scared the swing voters."

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Another strategic choice now being second-guessed is the decision to make the race simply a referendum on the incumbent. Inside the campaign, it was taken for granted that the voters would ultimately make a decision about Bush's record in office. If that were the case, the all-knowing polls confirmed, Bush wouldn't win. After all, a majority of voters consistently told pollsters the country was on the wrong track. "They were going to run a campaign on reassurance," says a former Kerry aide. "People wanted to get rid of Bush, so they thought clearing the hurdle was enough. They didn't want to do anything bolder." Carville agrees that their plan was to play it safe: "They thought they could win it by reassurance." In the analysis of Stanley Greenberg, who was added to the campaign's roster of pollsters in the final weeks, Kerry's problem was that voters didn't view the choice the way the campaign had predicted. Bush's emphasis on his own character and values successfully shifted the debate away from his actual record. "It became a vote on whether you agreed with [Bush's] worldview rather than his competence," says Greenberg.

On the other hand, even Shrum's fiercest critics give him credit for his work prepping Kerry for the debates, which momentarily saved the campaign when it was near death. Shrum had anticipated and prepared Kerry for every question he received. "There wasn't a single question from the three debates that I hadn't heard," says one campaign official. Adds a top Kerry aide, "I think he redeemed himself with debate prep. But that's it." As he jumped into a cab before heading off for Italy, Shrum seemed philosophical about the criticism, telling me, "I'm not in the mood to be terribly defensive about myself. The truth of the matter is, the reality speaks for itself. I was there. What I did, I did."

That's not enough for most Democrats. "Nobody should put Shrum, Devine, Donilon in charge of another presidential campaign," says a senior Kerry official. "There should be a three-strikes-and-you're-out rule, and there should definitely be a seven-strikes-and-you're-out rule." Says a senior Democratic strategist who worked on the campaign, "The one thing that Clinton didn't have, and the one thing that both [Al] Gore and Kerry had, was Bob Shrum." In the spring, when reporters wrote profiles of Shrum, they could expect an unsolicited phone call from his good friend and partner James Carville, who would rebut criticism of Shrum. By the fall, Carville himself was so angry at the way the Kerry campaign was being run, and Shrum was so hurt by Carville's criticisms, that the two men were barely speaking.

THERE ARE LOTS of other complaints circulating among Democrats. Stephanie Cutter, the communications director who was savaged in *Newsweek*'s insider account of the campaign, has, like Shrum, become a lightning rod for Democratic blame. The most frequent complaint is that she took on too much responsibility and was slow to bring in additional talent. But, like so much else, the lack of message also helps explain the criticism of Cutter. "I don't disagree with the characterization of Stephanie Cutter being in over her head and not getting the best people around her," says one senior Kerry adviser, "but she probably took a little too much blame. She asked the consultants for months, 'What's our frame against this guy?' and never got an answer." Another senior Democratic official who actually clashed with Cutter explains, "She was given an impossible set of jobs, any one of which she would have done extremely well. ... You can't do all those jobs yourself. She was titularly responsible for the fact that we had no rapid-response operation. She was not at all responsible for the fact the campaign had no message."

Cutter's critics say she made it hard for the campaign to bring aboard desperately needed talent in August. Her defenders say that she reached out to various Clinton-era big shots, but they rebuffed her because they were loath to leave their well-paid consulting jobs. Whatever the case, once the Clintonites did take over at the end of the campaign—a change known simply as "the coup" to Kerry aides—the staff rivalries became more poisonous. Mary Beth Cahill, the campaign manager the Clintonites wanted fired, was, not unreasonably, wary of the new regime. (She warned Cutter that Lockhart would "eat her alive.") In private, Teresa Heinz Kerry railed about the Clinton coup, suspicious of their motives. But at least the newcomers got results. John Sasso, one of the only late additions not from the Clinton White House, fixed the plane, and Lockhart fixed the Washington headquarters by bringing in adult supervision, but not without bruising egos. "Sasso came up and imposed order and cleaned shit up," says one Kerry aide who traveled on the plane. "He wasn't there to stroke you or make you feel good. The boss respected him and listened to him. He was just such a fucking dick at first. He wasn't like, 'Hello, you have done such a great job.' It was 'What the fuck is this? I'm here to clean up, not to make friends.'" It was a similar story with Lockhart, who sometimes roamed the downtown Washington headquarters twirling a baseball bat. "[Lockhart is] like a bear," says a senior Kerry aide. "He pissed a lot of people off. He made some people who had been there a long time seem worthless. But it was only two months left."

But, for all the staff intrigue and leaking and counterleaking among Kerry's aides, perhaps the most honest recrimination is that, in the end, it was Kerry's fault. He didn't inspire intense enthusiasm, even among many of his own employees. "The weird revolving cast of characters at the top was unhelpful," says a Kerry aide. "But people, ultimately, weren't that excited about the candidate." And most of Kerry's gaffes had nothing to do with his staff. It wasn't their fault that he couldn't get his story straight on Iraq or that he wore funny outfits when he went bicycling. "I don't imagine they recommended to him that he go windsurfing," says a senior adviser. "And it wasn't Bob Shrum or Stephanie Cutter or anyone else who said, 'I actually did vote for the eighty-seven billion dollars, before I voted against it.'" It was John Kerry. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Vulnerabilities

THE ENGLISH NOVELIST IAN McEwan is, among other things, a collector of shells. The shells that interest him are the ones that encase all of us in normality—most of the time. McEwan likes to show how easily these shells are cracked, and how the stripped person is someone whom he or she would not have expected to discover inside. In a previous screen adaptation of a McEwan novel, *The Comfort of Strangers* (1991), a blithe English couple visiting Venice meet a suave Venetian, and in the course of time the young pair find themselves shorn of their shells and considerably transformed. Now here is another of McEwan's novels, **ENDURING LOVE**, screenplay by Joe Penhall, in which the process, broadly speaking, is somewhat frighteningly repeated.

ENDURING LOVE
(Paramount Classics)

BIRTH
(Fine Line)

A pair of lovers, Joe and Claire, a teacher and a sculptor, are picnicking in the exquisite English countryside, just about to pop the cork of a champagne bottle, possibly as Joe is about to pop a marriage proposal, when a most unlikely thing happens. (McEwan savors unlikely things that are nonetheless possible.) A huge red passenger balloon descends from the sky. The basket bumps on the ground, throwing out a man, but a boy is left in the basket as the balloon rises again. Joe rushes to grab a rope to hold the balloon down and is joined by some other men who suddenly appear. They don't succeed in holding the balloon, and one of the men has a fatal accident. Another of the failed rescuers implores Joe to join him in a prayer for the dead man. Joe is not the prayerful type, but he lets himself consent. Thus this other man enters Joe's life, through a bizarre accident and through a first instance of persuasion.

The other man is Jed, a Welshman who is lanky and long-haired and insidiously cajoling. We never learn what Jed actually does or how he supports his rather mangy existence. Joe isn't much interested in Jed at first, but Jed pursues him. In a few days he phones Joe's apartment, saying that he is just across the street in a park, and pleads to see him. Out of some sort of compassion-cum-curiosity, Joe goes down to meet him. Jed, as he does in their subsequent meetings, tries to convince Joe that they ought to be friends. In a slippery reptilian way, he begins to wind himself around Joe's life. Joe does nothing to encourage Jed, yet the Welshman keeps turning up, almost stalking him. One day Jed even appears at a desk in the back of Joe's college classroom.

Jed's persistence has an effect on Joe's relationship with Claire and, tangentially, on other friendships. At first, and at second and third, we wonder why Joe doesn't report the stalker to the police, but after a while we sense that though Joe never speaks a word of interest, something about the almost rhapsodic Jed is engaging him. Early on we suspect that under Jed's verbiage and sinuosity there is a strain of the homoerotic. At last, in a climactic scene, this is confirmed—along with some violence. That climax stretches credibility, but the whole point of the piece is that the Joe of the opening has become someone else. The college teacher, with a sympathetic lover and with that clutch of wine-bibbing intellectual friends who are the stock company of any English film about a teacher, is changed, under the pressure applied by Jed—this stranger who keeps telling Joe how much he cares for him. (The title might also be read as *The Enduring of Love*.)

Roger Michell, who directed *The Mother* with understanding and restraint, does as well here except for a batch of overhead shots that stick out as irrelevant. Michell again uses Daniel Craig, who was the carpenter-lover of the sexagenarian woman in the previous film. Here Craig is Joe and convinces us that the repeated encounters with Jed are gradually cracking him open. Rhys Ifans, who comes naturally by his Welsh accent, starts out with an advantage. Ifans has a faintly repellent yet intrusive quality to begin with, so his performance of Jed begins with eerie authenticity. Samantha Morton has a good deal to do as Claire but does none of it interestingly.

BIRTH is one of those films occasionally encountered that make me question my nativity or that of the film-makers. Were they and I born on the same planet? If so, how could we now have such vastly different criteria of a film story's believability? *Birth* is about a ten-year-old boy who turns up one day at the luxe Fifth Avenue apartment of a woman who lost her husband ten years earlier and is about to remarry. The boy maintains that he is the dead husband reincarnated. After the expected pooh-poohing of the boy's claims, the widow and her family and friends and fiancé begin to take him seriously because of what he knows about the widow's erstwhile husband. Psychologists and the boy's parents get involved. It reaches the point where the boy and the widow are in a bathtub together; then, a bit further on, she suggests to the boy that they go away together and, in eleven years, marry.

Birth is not presented as testimony of the supernatural or of the transmigration of souls, subjects taken seriously by some. It is all just a grab at plot novelty—something odd that happens, made even more odd because it occurs in polished urban settings with people to match. The boy's knowledge of things about the dead husband is latterly explained with a kind of creaky ease. Matters are not helped by the acting of Nicole Kidman as the widow. Leaner than ever and with short hair, she is still a merely obedient actress: she does what the screenplay and the director ask her to do, without

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any enrichment or texture. Lauren Bacall plays her mother, continuing to sell her one product, no-nonsense common sense, though here it is pretty ineffectual. The boy is played as earnestly as possible by Cameron Bright. The director, Jonathan Glazer, is modestly competent except that he agreed to do this screenplay. Perhaps this is because the chief writer of that screenplay, teamed with Glazer and Milo Addica, was Jean-Claude Carrière, who, in a long career, worked on several films with Luis Buñuel. This was the first and I hope the only time I was glad that Buñuel is dead. He was spared the descent of his colleague. ■

Richard Jenkyns
Bad Will Hunting

WILL IN THE WORLD:
HOW SHAKESPEARE BECAME SHAKESPEARE
By Stephen Greenblatt
(W. W. Norton, 430 pp., $26.95)

WHY DO WE WANT TO know about Shakespeare's life? The basic answer is simple enough: we have a natural desire to find out what we can about those we admire, and a less elevated itch for gossip about the famous. Yet a more ambitious claim can also be made: that the knowledge of an author's life may illuminate his work, and that conversely (and more dubiously) the work can reveal the life. Stephen Greenblatt's biographical study of Shakespeare rests upon both these propositions.

How much light the life sheds on the work must vary from one writer to another. Some authors impress their individuality on their writing—Milton, for example, or Dante. Others are invisible or opaque, like Homer. Dramatists are more likely to be opaque, because they do not speak *in propria persona*, but even among their company there is some variation: one could learn a good deal about George Bernard Shaw the man from his plays alone, but about Sophocles one learns nothing. And Shakespeare seems to be one of the most opaque of all.

Ironically, we might be persuaded that we had a better sense of the man if less of his work had survived. If only *The Phoenix and the Turtle* had survived, we would think him cerebral and metaphysical. If only the non-dramatic poems had survived, we would posit an aristocratic and courtly temperament. If only *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing* had survived, we would think him a blithe spirit. If only *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* had survived, we might have thought him pessimistic to the point of neurosis. Whether or not Shakespeare is the greatest of all writers, he is assuredly the most versatile, and he is unmatched for imaginative engagement with people very unlike himself and experiences very unlike his own. To take an obvious example: no one has explored the thoughts and feelings of women with deeper sympathy and understanding, but Shakespeare was not a woman. As Coleridge said, he was "myriad-minded," unsurpassed in his ability to escape the prison of his days and get outside himself.

Any attempt to relate his life and his work, therefore, demands caution and judgment. Besides, people are complicated, and apparently commonsense presumptions about writers' lives may be wide of the mark. The external evidence about Shakespeare is indeed surprising. It is hard to believe that what the author of *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* really wanted in middle age was to become a West Midlands businessman, but that seems to have been more or less the case. Had he not dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to the earl of Southampton, we would scarcely have guessed that he had connected himself to high aristocracy. How close the connection was, we do not know. (Many scholars have supposed it to have been very close.) Most of what is in Shakespeare's plays he cannot have experienced himself—but it may seem tempting to take the residue and derive that

Richard Jenkyns is professor of the classical tradition at Oxford University.

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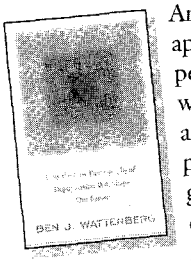

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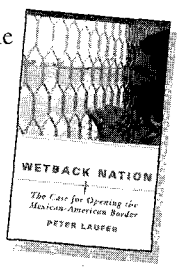

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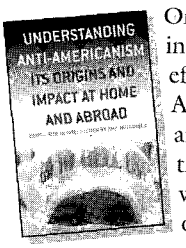
PAUL HOLLANDER, EDITOR
Understanding Anti-Americanism



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from personal experience.

Yet such an approach is highly subjective and easily self-fulfilling. The point may be illustrated from a small mistake that Greenblatt makes. In *Henry VI, Part 2,* Shakespeare describes a warrior with so many arrows stuck in him that he looks like a porcupine, and Greenblatt comments that "as a country boy, he had almost certainly seen his share of sharp-quilled porcupines." Not so. There were no porcupines in England, nor any animal like them. This image is certainly something that Shakespeare got from pictures. Nothing much hangs on this particular example, but it suggests how arbitrary such speculation is, and how little it informs us. It tells us only that Shakespeare might have seen what he might have seen.

GREENBLATT'S BOOK IS SKILLfully written, with spirit and verve. It gives a vivid picture of the Elizabethan world, and it has fine and illuminating things to say about particular aspects of Shakespeare—about the blend of disclosure and concealment in the sonnets, about the development in the playwright's use of soliloquy and his deepening ability to represent inwardness, about the ambivalence in his portrait of Shylock. Yet much of the book is silly. It shows small understanding of how to weigh historical evidence; and its notion of the creative process, and of the relation between a writer's work and a writer's life, is naïve.

Consider the following argument (it is my own fabrication). Some people have birthmarks, and so Shakespeare may have had one. If he had a birthmark (and this cannot be proved), it would have added to his self-consciousness when he came to London. In romances, the lost princess is often identified by a birthmark, but Perdita, the lost princess in *The Winter's Tale,* is identified by some tokens; and this at once becomes explicable if Shakespeare was sensitive about his birthmark. When Shakespeare withdrew from London to Stratford in his mid-forties, he was doubtless moved by personal considerations, such as the desire to live the life of a gentleman and also sensitivity about a birthmark.

Everyone will recognize that this is an absurd type of speculation; but Greenblatt constantly proceeds in this manner, especially in the first half of the book. (The later parts improve considerably.) Recurrently, he starts with a speculation that cannot be disproved. This is then allowed to evolve into a serious possibility, and then into a likelihood, and sometimes it is even presented as a fact. In some cases, it does not matter much. Greenblatt muses several times on what gave the teenaged Shakespeare erections: this seems pretty pointless, and somewhat prurient, but the pointlessness is, so to speak, on the surface. Elsewhere, though, more is at stake.

A well-known theory places the young Shakespeare for a time in the household of recusant Catholics in Lancashire. Greenblatt takes this as probable. It derives from the record that a William Shakeshafte was in the household, and from family tradition, and from John Aubrey's story that Shakespeare had been a schoolmaster in the country. My own view is skeptical: there seem to be too many flimsy links in the chain of speculation. Shakeshafte, a name found elsewhere in Lancashire, is different from Shakespeare. The Shakeshafte in question is described as a servant who will need a new master after his present master's death. A country schoolmaster is different from a private tutor. And why should choice or compulsion have exiled Shakespeare so far from prosperous middle England to a remote and backward part of the north?

More generally, there is, I think, a mistake of method here: the presumption that where we have only one story available to us, that story has a good chance of being true. Aubrey (a late and unreliable source) tells us that Shakespeare's father was a butcher, and that as a boy the future bard used to share in the slaughtering, uttering heroic speeches over the corpses; but we reject this, because we know that Shakespeare's father was a glover. Aubrey tells us that he was a schoolmaster in the country, and some accept this, because they have no alternative version to set against it. And indeed it is possible. Yet one might doubt even this much. Schoolmasters in Shakespeare's plays are buffoons; he shows us the tedium of school from the pupil's point of view. (Who can forget the "school-boy ... creeping like snail/Unwillingly to school"?) The interrogation of the schoolboy William by his master in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* does seem, unusually, to contain a private joke; but still we miss any note of sympathy for the poor teacher coping with his reluctant charges. If Shakespeare had taught boys, we might expect to have found that somewhere.

When he finds the theory of Shakespeare in the north plausible, Greenblatt is in good company, but he wants to go further. There were Catholic priests active underground in late Elizabethan England, and if they were captured, they were tortured and then executed by the hideous method applied to traitors. The most famous of them was the Jesuit Edmund Campion. If Shakespeare were living in a recusant family, Greenblatt wonders, might he have met Campion? Several pages of pure fantasy follow about how Shakespeare and Campion must have felt about each other "in this version of events." A little later we hear about "the moment when Shakespeare may have encountered Campion"—a moment, remember, for which there is no evidence whatever; and a page after that we read "if he actually saw Campion in 1581." Finally, "Shakespeare never referred openly to Campion," but Edgar in *King Lear* (we learn from Greenblatt) may be a recollection of him.

In this way Greenblatt constructs a highly dramatic scenario. In his account, Shakespeare was so passionate a Catholic that he risked torture and death to consort with Catholic priests, and maybe with the most wanted man in England. Then he completely reversed himself, quickly returned to Stratford, and starting sleeping with Anne Hathaway—"as if to mark his decisive distance from Campion," Greenblatt speculates some more. It is a sensational story of emotional turbulence, with a dramatic lurch from one extreme to another; and it is entirely Greenblatt's fiction.

It is also an improbable fiction. Shakespeare's religion is a famously puzzling matter. Past generations have noticed, often with reluctance or regret, the lack of religious expression in him. Others have admired it: Kenneth Clark, in *Civilization,* saw in Shakespeare a new dimension of human experience, a

Ulysses
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man without piety who had outstared the emptiness. It has been said that but for the sonnet "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth" (oddly ignored by Greenblatt) one would not know that Shakespeare was a Christian at all. And even this, Shakespeare's most intensely spiritual utterance, contains no explicitly religious word, not even the name of God. The more Elizabethan literature one reads, the more striking is Shakespeare's paucity of religious reference. It is unlikely that he had a strongly devout temper at any stage of his life. And that is probably as much as we can say.

SHAKESPEARE DREW FALSTAFF from life, Greenblatt tells us: his model was Robert Greene. This is bizarre. Greene, a wild bohemian, dead at thirty-two, was the author of plays, poems, romances, and an account of the London criminal underworld, but he is now perhaps best remembered for attacking Shakespeare as a conceited "Shakescene." Falstaff is old, a soldier, a gentleman, sociable, robust, a survivor; whereas Greene was young, a *poète maudit*, of humble birth, disturbed, bitter, self-destructive—more like Rimbaud than Sir John. It is hard to see that Greene and Falstaff have anything at all in common, apart from frequenting taverns where whores might be found, which was not particularly rare in Elizabethan London. There is another fallacy here: the supposition that people of whom we have heard mix mostly with other people of whom we have heard. If Shakespeare did haunt London's taverns, he will easily have met a dozen people who were more like Falstaff than was Greene. But Greene's name is in the history books, and the others are unknown.

Anyway, Greenblatt seems to have forgotten that he has already found the source for Falstaff in a radically different place: in Shakespeare's father. It is difficult, he says, to account for the "overwhelming power and pathos of the relationship between Hal and Falstaff" unless the dramatist was drawing upon intimate and personal experience. (Notice the peculiar belief that Shakespeare was short of imagination. If we apply this principle consistently to his plays, he must have led a colorful life indeed.) John Shakespeare got into financial difficulties, and Greenblatt suggests that he might have turned to the bottle, to his son's revulsion. There is no evidence at all for this—nil, zilch. Greenblatt then picks up a late and secondhand anecdote about someone visiting Stratford and meeting a merry, rosy-cheeked old gentleman who turned out to be the poet's father. Greenblatt seems to recognize that the anecdote is unlikely to be true, but still he runs with it. Perhaps the red cheeks came from too much booze, he suggests. But the jolly old toper and the alcoholic saddo are quite different conceptions—and both of them are inventions.

SUCH FANTASIES LEAD US AWAY from what we actually can infer about Shakespeare's creative processes. Falstaff seems to derive from the braggart soldier of Roman comedy and the buffoonish Vice of medieval plays, fused in the crucible of the playwright's imagination with his knowledge of human nature and with his artistic freedom. This is a more interesting story, as well as a likelier one. In general, Greenblatt neglects Shakespeare's reading: he says very little about the Bible (though he does acknowledge its importance) and even less about the Latin literature on which the poet was brought up. In one or two places this leads him to give far-fetched explanations for allusions that an educated Elizabethan would have recognized at once.

The sonnets are notoriously a hunting ground for amateur sleuths, sentimentalists, and complete loonies. Greenblatt is none of these; and in his writing about these poems he is rather wise, asserting that they cannot be taken as direct reports of the poet's private life. Truth to tell, he is not wholly consistent, falling back in the end on the view that the young man is Southampton and the dark lady a particular though unidentifiable person in Shakespeare's life; but his earlier stress on the fictionality of the sonnets remains valuable, and it is made with subtlety.

It is remarkable how many well-read people, who would not treat any other literary text in this way, take a fundamentalist approach to the sonnets—that is, they assume the sonnets to be a more or less straight reflection of the actual life of William Shakespeare. Yet there are strong reasons to doubt this. There was a short but intense craze for sequences of love sonnets in the 1590s. Are we to suppose that at almost the same time half the major Elizabethan poets suddenly fell in love with captious, changeable women who gave them hell? Of course not—and in most of these cases scholars agree that the love stories are largely or wholly fictional. Shakespeare's sonnets in fact offer more evidence of fictionality than most, because the setup is so schematic: the virtuous, ennobling, non-sexual love for a fair male is contrasted with a sinful, embittered, sexual love for a dark woman. Life is seldom so tidy. My own guess (and a guess is all it is) is that the element of historicity in the sonnets is small, and certainly far smaller than the popular idea would have it. The sonnets were compared in their time to Ovid, and the Latin love elegists are indeed a key, for they wrote first-person fictions on a base of reality—fictions in which they are themselves the protagonists. There is no narrative as such, and only the poet speaks, but we get partial glimpses of an ongoing story that is not fully told to us. It is an aesthetic that the Elizabethans understood.

SHAKESPEARE WROTE HIS DEEPEST tragedies in the early years of the seventeenth century, and many have wondered if some darkness came over his spirit at this time. Greenblatt suggests that the tragedies are his response to the death of his son Hamnet in 1596. The glaring difficulty with this is that Hamnet's death was followed by the greater number of Shakespeare's most brilliant comedies. Greenblatt's answer is that the trauma took some years to emerge. He adds that Shakespeare's father might have pressed him to find a priest to say a mass for Hamnet, and this could have produced family tension. If John Shakespeare was ill in 1600 (he was to die a year later), this might have stirred the psychic disturbance that led to *Hamlet*.

The theory is certainly not impossible. But it is not necessary either. We know too many other cases of artists producing sparkling work at times of desolation, and of the opposite. Shakespeare no more had to be grief-stricken to write *Othello* than Verdi had to be to set it to music. Tragedy was in vogue, and not all the Jacobean dramatists will have been writing out of personal pain. In Shakespeare's case, we might distinguish between plays that depict particular misfortunes, such as *Othello* or *Antony and Cleopatra*, and those in which the idea is presented that the whole world is altogether weary and stale, or cruel, or disgusting—*Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Timon*

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of Athens, perhaps *Macbeth*. Even in this latter class, however, it is one or more of the characters from whom these sentiments spring, and it is not certain that they speak for the author: most of Shakespeare's tragedies end with some qualified hope.

Greenblatt reasonably points to the large difference between *Hamlet* and anything Shakespeare had written before. Yet the mid-thirties is a natural time for a great leap forward: this is when Beethoven wrote the Eroica Symphony and Michelangelo attacked the Sistine Chapel's ceiling. The correct answer to the question of whether Shakespeare's personal feelings turned him toward tragedy may seem disappointing, but it is inevitable: we just do not know.

GREENBLATT IS IN SEARCH OF "clues to unravel the great mystery of such immense creative power." "How is an achievement of this magnitude to be explained?" he asks. "How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare?" But he is addressing a problem that does not exist. We could ask the same about any exceptional human being, and about some more forcefully than about Shakespeare. How did a boy from the backwoods of Stagira become Aristotle? How did an overworked organist produce the *St. Matthew Passion*? How did an uneducated boor from Bonn come to compose the Ninth Symphony and the late string quartets? Chance—or genes, or whatever—sometimes throws up extraordinary talent. Shakespeare, it might even be said, was rather well placed for literary success, with a reasonably secure middle-class background, a solid schooling, and a life that gave him early experience of country, town, and city; the son of a peasant or a peer would have found it much harder to break into playwriting. Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Newton, Einstein are all astonishing, but they are not mysterious, except in the sense that all rare capacity is mysterious.

Greenblatt's happy admiration for Shakespeare is engaging, but it is strangely combined with a low estimate of his imaginative capability. He presents Shakespeare as a man who infects his plays with his own hang-ups. Hamlet complains about the drunken revels at his father's wake because Shakespeare is disgusted by his father's alcoholism. Prospero warns Ferdinand and Miranda against sex before marriage because Shakespeare was bitter about his shotgun marriage. Shakespeare was a snob and a social climber who became an actor because he could dress up and indulge his fantasies of being grand. Well, Shakespeare the man may or may not have been attractive, but Shakespeare the artist surely writes out of a generosity of imagination—from an overflowing spirit, not a cramped or imprisoned one.

The danger of simple biographical readings of the plays, raw psychological correspondences, is that they may steal the richness from them. Consider the matter of marriage. Shakespeare's marriage, most probably, was not a success, and Greenblatt sees this reflected in the plays, which do not, he says, portray good marriages, because their author is cynical about the possibility. But the depiction of happy marriage is rare in all literature, as Greenblatt himself allows—not because it has been thought unimportant or unattainable, but because it is undramatic and very hard to depict well. If we look more carefully, moreover, the idea of good marriage is indeed present in Shakespeare. A subtler criticism will see that the Macbeths' marriage is, in its perverse way, a success. The scene between Portia and Brutus in *Julius Caesar* does not show a marriage lacking true intimacy, as Greenblatt supposes; on the contrary, Portia's distress is at finding a good marriage damaged by the awakening sense that her husband is hiding something from her. *Othello* depicts the destruction of a good marriage (as Verdi understood so well).

Greenblatt refers to Hamlet's revulsion at his mother's rampant middle-aged sexuality: "spousal intimacy in *Hamlet* is vaguely nauseating," he remarks. But the revulsion is Hamlet's, not Shakespeare's; and the scene brilliantly anatomizes the difficulty that the young face in accepting their parents as sexual beings. We lose a whole dimension of this great scene if we do not feel the poignancy of Gertrude's passion for Claudius. To suppose that Shakespeare is fretting over Anne Hathaway here is to suck the humanity and wisdom from his portrait.

I learned a great deal from Stephen Greenblatt's book about the poet and his world. But I owe my profit in reading it to my willingness to disbelieve much of it and to doubt still more. Its liveliness is not enough to compensate for its capriciousness. *Will in the World* is an amusing title, but *What You Will* would have been closer to the mark, or *As You Like It*, except that they have already been taken. ■

Alan Taylor

Master and Slave

LANDON CARTER'S UNEASY KINGDOM: REVOLUTION AND REBELLION ON A VIRGINIA PLANTATION
By Rhys Isaac
(Oxford University Press, 423 pp., $30)

LANDON CARTER SEEMED TO be a powerful man. A grandee of eighteenth-century Virginia, he resided at Sabine Hall, a great house at the heart of a plantation in Richmond County. By the time he died, in 1778, Carter owned five hundred slaves and nearly fifty thousand acres of fertile land in eight counties. Those possessions ranked him among the ten wealthiest men in Virginia. As colonel of the militia, presiding judge of the court, and Anglican parish vestryman, Carter dominated all three centers of county power. By election of the free white men with property, he also held a seat in Virginia's colonial assembly, known as the House of Burgesses, a conclave of the colony's greatest men. During the 1760s and early 1770s, Carter pursued influence beyond Virginia by writing on behalf of the intercolonial resistance to British taxation.

But appearances partially deceived, for Landon Carter was obsessed by his weakness, by his inability to command peers, neighbors, priests, slaves, and children. In the House of Burgesses, he proved ambitious but obtuse, easily foiled by the dominant power broker, John Robinson, the shrewd speaker of the House. At home, neighboring farm-

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ers of lesser means and lower status often defied Carter by running their livestock on his fields while killing his straying animals. The Anglican priests of his parish rejected his dictation, and they compounded the insult by preaching pointed sermons against pride. When Carter bristled, one priest boldly "replied that I was glad he had applied it, for it was against every one that was proud." Even Carter's slaves resisted by pilfering, roaming, drinking, malingering, damaging tools and animals, and running away. And Carter's own children contradicted their hectoring father, preferring prolonged acrimony to abject submission.

Carter's weakness was owed to his power, which bred fantasies of thorough paternal control over his vast family of dependents: neighbors, priests, and slaves as well as kin. When reality inevitably fell short of those fantasies, Carter poured a self-righteous, self-pitying anger into a truly extraordinary diary. Begun in 1752 and kept for the remainder of his life, Carter's diary is the most detailed and fascinating source to survive from those decades in Virginia. Its focus shifts markedly after 1756, from an initial preoccupation with political procedures in the House of Burgesses to the perplexities of plantation management. A decade later Carter dedicated his pages to a deepening obsession with controlling his family and slaves, a preoccupation that Rhys Isaac links to the growing conflict between the colonists and their British overlords.

THIS DIARY SERVES AS THE primary source for Isaac's lively biography of the tormented and tormenting planter. Isaac briefly flirts with making himself a character in the book: "To be the historian who will present Landon Carter as a storyteller witness to the revolutions of his times is to be the scriptwriter and theater director of a major historical stage show. I shall introduce myself also." He was born in South Africa in 1937: a place in time that privileged white boys. Rejecting the benefits and the perils of apartheid, Isaac's family moved to Australia, where he became a historian with an anthropological approach and a commitment to "address the eons-old race, class, and gender exploitation that still continues everywhere." With this life experience, by confessing but renouncing his own arbitrary privileges of birth, Isaac bids for the moral authority to write on masters and slaves.

This is Isaac's second book about revolutionary Virginia. In 1982, he published the highly acclaimed *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*, an evocative and innovative study of the interplay of religious and political culture in making the American Revolution. Now he returns to Virginia on a more intimate scale, to study the journal of one troubled planter. After years of pondering Carter's diary, Isaac developed his own obsession: a personal campaign to promote Carter's book to "a prominent place in American literature." Smitten by the vigorous writing, Isaac extols the diary as "a great pastoral in prose" that manifests "Landon's complex virtuosity as a teller of stories." By elevating the diary to a unified and purposeful work of literature, Isaac seeks to rescue it from its traditional status as a mere source for historians.

But Carter's own words eventually undermine Isaac's case for his literary significance. Although Isaac considers the diary an "unedited masterpiece," it requires heavy editing for many passages to become coherent, as Isaac confesses to the frequent "rearrangements that I judge necessary to make them intelligible." And by devoting nearly half of his biography to Carter's quoted words, Isaac immerses readers in his hero's flaws, as a writer and as a man. Lacking originality, Carter expressed a narrow range of hidebound sentiments at repetitive length. For example: "I now see the impossibility for meriting anything from the rising generation for there will be some vain enough to fancy their knowledge exceeds experience, and ridiculous enough to strike in with every opposition till at last they—through their ignorance—grow mean enough to show their folly, and impudent enough to rejoice at the consequences." From the judicial bench, he added: "Though they fancy the optics of old age are dull—I believe they will in good time be convinced that my glasses were clear enough to discern their artifices."

At first the diary's self-pity and clumsy egotism amuses, serving up Carter as the oblivious butt to his own existential joke. But the sustained reiteration of a limited mind soon wears thin, revealing the pompous boor who so irritated his contemporaries. Thomas Jefferson aptly concluded that Carter's "speeches, like his writings, were dull, vapid, verbose, egotistical, smooth as the lullaby of the nurse, and commanding, like that, the repose only of the hearer." So too with his diary, when taken in heavy doses.

BY BIRTH, IN 1710, LANDON Carter joined the wealthiest and most prestigious family in colonial Virginia, that of Robert "King" Carter, who owned 333,000 acres and 700 enslaved Africans. In 1719, King Carter sent nine-year-old Landon across the Atlantic to England for an education in Latin and Greek. For an elite patriarch of that generation, educating his son for genteel power at the imperial capital trumped the bonds of daily intimacy. In 1727, Landon returned as a young man of seventeen to learn plantation management from his demanding father. Five years later, King Carter died, leaving his vast estate and a heavy load of expectations to his five sons. During the next generation, Landon Carter's family and slaves would rue the growth in memory of King Carter's power to mythical proportions.

Surely such a formidable father shaped Landon's later compulsion to maintain exaggerated pretensions to patriarchy. Of equal importance to that excessive worship was that the son knew his father only at a reverential distance during a prolonged and key period of adolescent development. Unfortunately, Isaac narrates Landon's youth so briefly that we learn precious little about his father's influence. Of Landon's mother Isaac tells even less—only that she died when the future diarist was nine.

In 1732, the death of King Carter freed Landon to marry, which he did early and often. All three of his wives died soon, the last in the mid-1750s. Collectively, they bore eight children, who subsequently endured the brunt of a demanding father without a mother as buffer. Declining finally to remarry, Carter instead cultivated a deep misogyny: "I don't think there can be a more treacherous, interprising, perverse, and hellish Genius than is to be met with in A Woman." That misogyny fed off a romanticization of his last wife, Elizabeth Beale Carter, defined as the dutiful exception that proved the rule. As with his father, so with his last wife: Carter's memory alchemized Elizabeth into a paragon of obedience—a standing rebuke to all living women, and especially to her niece Winifred Beale.

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IN THE DIARY, THE MOST POWERFUL and sustained conflict pits Landon against his eldest son, Robert Wormely Carter, who bore a heavy burden as the primary heir. Defying his father, Robert married Winifred Beale, a cousin, of merely modest wealth, a property mismatch that infuriated his status-obsessed father. In perverse—and revealing—revenge, Landon obliged the couple to live under his roof at Sabine Hall for the rest of his life, on pain of forfeiting their inheritance. Robert experienced a daily hell from, in his words, "being compelled to live with him who told me I was his daily curse."

A tense truce persisted until June 1766, when an eight-year-old grandson, dutifully named Landon, sassed his mother in his grandfather's presence. Determined to rule all relationships under his roof, grandfather Landon rebuked and shook the boy before striking him with a riding crop. This abuse alarmed and outraged his parents, as Carter narrated: "Madam then rose like a bedlamite that her child should be struck with a whip—and up came her Knight Errant to his father with some heavy God damnings, but he prudently did not touch me. Otherwise my whip handle should have settled him—if I could." Winifred and Robert threatened to leave, while Landon vowed to cease supporting a grandson "encouraged to insult me."

But he and they would make these idle threats many more times, as they seemed to need one another's enmity. By finding insult and threat in petty disputes, all three provoked an escalating succession of violent quarrels. One prolonged row began when Landon faulted a granddaughter for putting excessive butter on her bread. Another commenced when Robert insinuated that old Landon used more than his share of vinegar. Bellowed insults, slammed doors, and angry threats ripened from disagreements over an open window or over how much rain had fallen during the night. The patriarch aptly lamented their "eternal fretting at nothing and indeed quarreling about as little." In mutual misery, this family clung together because Robert and Winifred coveted the genteel comforts of Sabine Hall and the prospect of a lavish inheritance, while Landon needed daily opportunities to defend patriarchy by rebuking and quarreling, all the while narrating his side in the acid prose of his diary.

Despite seeing these fights up close and personal, Landon's daughter Judith repeated them. In 1772, she too defied her father by eloping to marry another Beale, Reuben, younger brother to Winifred. Claiming "a right to dispose of my children as I please," Landon angrily disowned Judith, previously his pampered favorite. For this loss, he faulted Reuben's father, Captain Beale, as (in Isaac's words) "the predator of his children and his property." But above all Landon blamed Winifred, cast as the arch-conspirator against the peace and the order of Sabine Hall. In charging his children with betraying the Carter wealth to Beale predation, Landon could claim no consistency, for he had married Captain Beale's sister, who was Winifred and Reuben's aunt. Small wonder that his children paid so little heed to his arbitrary commands.

Painfully insecure, Carter adopted an angry arrogance that repelled the flattery and the deference that he so coveted. Easily hurt, he found malevolent menace in the smallest slights. Slaves, overseers, priests, neighbors, children, and political colleagues all seemed to conspire against him. These compounding frustrations fueled Carter's general misanthropy, which did not spare his conflicted self. Despite repeated resolutions, Carter could never become "a master of himself," could never curb the volatile temper expressed by his cutting tongue and riding crop. One day at a local tavern, Carter encountered Dr. Nicholas Flood, who accused Carter of insulting his reputation, leading to this reply:

> I then told him he has been misinformed—for I always thought him too worthless a fellow to think of at all. He said he did not know what Worthless meant. I said—a scoundrel beneath anybody's notice. On which he called me a damned lyar. I said it was common for the devil to rebuke me. He said he was but a Young devil. I replied [that] there was not one in hell while he was on earth.

This heated exchange violated a recent vow in Carter's diary: "Words dropped in a Passion give greater wounds than can be expressed, not so much to the person spoken to as to the Speaker. I every day see the truth of this." But reforming proved harder than seeing.

BY OUR STANDARDS, LANDON Carter personified selfish indulgence, but he acted from a heavy burden of duty to others. True to his class and to his century, Carter devoutly believed in a hierarchical social order mandated and ruled by God. Patriarchs were God's servants, commanded both to protect and to command their own subordinates: children, servants, and slaves. Should patriarchs fail in that double duty to sustain and to discipline, they would dissolve their families and plunge their communities into destructive chaos. Hierarchical relationships provided the essential ligaments of the social body. Slaves and children could not live without the confining protection of their master and father. In sum, colonial Virginians did not yet subscribe to the voluntary association of free and equal individuals that we cherish today as the supposed foundation of our social order.

Landon's compulsion to control people also expressed a profound anxiety at his own helplessness before the awesome power of an unpredictable God. To prosper, a Virginia planter needed large and healthy crops of tobacco, wheat, and corn, as well as thriving stocks of cattle and hogs; but all were vulnerable to a variable climate of untimely rainstorms, prolonged droughts, premature frosts, and severe winters. The crops also suffered from a shifting and maddening array of predators, including moles, birds, caterpillars, tobacco flies, fungal blight, ground worms, and fly weevils. In the ebb and flow of nature, Carter saw the dictates of an omniscient God engaged directly in the natural world and in the plight of erring humans.

In his diary Landon recorded climactic variation and pest infestations in the vain hope of finding patterns that could suggest methods of mitigation—some small measures of reassuring control for the anxious planter. In this system of experimental observation, Carter adopted an Enlightenment rationalism, grafting it onto his traditional and patriarchal Christianity. In search of trans-Atlantic fame, Carter published in London his observations on the fly weevil, and subsequently boasted that "so great is the veneration that Europe has for me, as to pronounce me the greatest Natural Philosopher of this age." No small boast, in the age of Franklin. By finding synergies rather than tensions between tradition and modernity, faith and science,

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Carter was a typical gentleman of the mid–eighteenth century.

SEEN IN RETROSPECT, THROUGH the prism of their elegant mansions, Virginia's great planters seem supremely confident and powerful. But Isaac skillfully demonstrates their profound dread of their own impotence before the double vagaries of nature and the export market for their crops. Human commerce and climatic change conspired against the regular prosperity that planters coveted. That frustration then drove the planters to try to control what did seem within their grasp: the exertions of their slaves. But here they exaggerated the power of the whip to reduce other humans to docile extensions of their master's will.

While battling his children within Sabine Hall, Landon also locked himself into prolonged conflict with his slaves in the fields. As with his nuclear family, so with his "external family" Landon fancied himself the consummate paternalist who nurtured the ill and aged, and punished the refractory, and compelled hard and productive labor from the able. He owned and provided the clothing, shelter, food, and medical treatment needed to keep the slaves alive and working for his profit. Scoffing at Jefferson's egalitarian rhetoric, Carter attributed inequality to divine command, for he considered slaves both destined and bred for inferiority. "They can be as little humanized as bears," he observed; "such a brutish ass does slavery beget—altho' they may be born Slaves." Only threats and punishments could motivate them, for "kindness to a Negroe" was "the surest way to spoil him." Rejecting emancipation as a dangerous folly, Carter insisted that "slaves are devils, and to make them otherwise than slaves will be to set devils free."

He relentlessly pushed and schemed to extract more work from his slaves so as to maximize his crops: "nothing [is] so certain as spoiling your slaves by allowing them but little to do; so sure are they from thence to learn to do nothing at All." When slaves failed to keep up with his accelerating pace, they felt the lash. And yet he described runaways as ingrates who forgot his material support. He insisted "that I have no kind of Severity in the least to accuse myself of to one of them; but on the contrary a behaviour on my part that should have taught them gratitude if there ever was a virtue of the sort in such creatures." He claimed to whip them for their own good by compelling a due attention to duty, and so he called their punishments "correction."

When whipping or confinement failed to break a resisting slave, Carter threatened sale to the distant Carolinas or the West Indies, where the exiled could never again see family or friends. He also vowed to prosecute repeat offenders in the county court, where he presided, and which could inflict the death penalty for any felony, such as the theft of a hog. Dealing in psychological pressure, Carter ordered one recalcitrant slave to make his own coffin in preparation for trial and inevitable execution. Yet Carter's worst threats to the slaves proved as idle as his repeated vows to disown his heirs. According to the surviving record, he neither sold away nor had executed any slave—an inconsistency that must have bred the slaves' contempt for their master's bluster.

Isaac observes that because Carter "could not conclusively win in his incessant struggles for mastery," he remained locked with his slaves in "a self-perpetuating pattern of rebellion (including revels) by one side, and recurrent harsh repressions on the other." Carter filled his diary with episodes of slave resistance detected and foiled; but the accumulating entries undermine his pretensions to omniscience and omnipotence, for they suggest a master repeatedly mocked and defied by slaves dismissive of his cant.

THE MOST REVEALING AND tragic relationship in the diary is Carter's sustained campaign to control and to reform a slave named Nassaw. As manservant and medical assistant, Nassaw lived and worked more closely with Carter than did any other slave. Indeed, they evidently spent more time together, in intimate but unequal collaboration, than either did with any of his own children. Robert could ride away from his father's diatribes; but not so for Nassaw, who risked the whip every day of his life. Carter needed Nassaw's medical skill, but he despised him for compromising it with indolence and drunkenness: temporary escapes from the domineering master. Carter concluded that "he seems resolved to drink in spight of me, and I believe in order to spight me." On these occasions, Carter had Nassaw whipped, "but as soon as the cuts heal, he gets drunk directly." And yet Carter did not relent, expressing a "hope [that] I may still save his soul." That effort may have cost Carter his own soul.

Isaac struggles to extract the slave perspective buried within Carter's domineering prose, which attempts to erase African American culture. "Landon turned a deaf ear," Isaac writes, "to the ritual and celebratory life of his people." Isaac mourns the absence of any sources written by Carter's slaves—who were denied literacy, to say nothing of an archive for their words. To fill the void, Isaac imaginatively enlists African folklore and interviews from 1937 with former slaves born in mid-nineteenth-century Virginia. But such distant sources sometimes invite speculation beyond plausibility, as when Isaac suggests that drunken slaves were "accessing sacred realms in the Africa from which the ancestors of Landon's people had recently been forcibly removed."

DURING THE 1760S AND EARLY 1770s, a rupture in the British Empire complicated Landon's efforts to control his plantation and family. Isaac illuminates the fundamental contradiction within a republican revolution led in Virginia by the great slaveholders. Both the British Empire and Virginia slavery relied on a patriarchal hierarchy for justification. If the colonial grandees disavowed the king as father, how could they claim obedience from their own slaves and children? By defying the king in the name of a universal liberty, the planters risked opening a Pandora's box of egalitarian aspiration, as slaves, servants, wives, the young, and the poor might all reject subordination. Carter expressed a "dread whether our own internal contentions will not again grow from this republican form [that] we all seem to be hurrying into; for everybody wants to be ahead." So no one seemed to remember his or her proper place.

Isaac argues that a sense of complicity in bringing down the king heightened Carter's obsession with controlling his own dependents. Beginning in 1766, Carter filled his diary with, in Isaac's words, "angry stories of rebellions in his own little kingdom." Those stories merged as Carter accused his son of encouraging his daughter to elope and his slaves to resist. Everyone at home seemed to conspire against Carter as he worked in politics to restrict the power of the empire.

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Denouncing the British taxes as a threat to American liberty, Carter led the patriot resistance in Richmond County. But he balked in 1776, when radicals such as Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine pushed the patriots to declare independence and to establish republican state governments. Dreading a social upheaval, Carter wanted colonial freedom from British taxation without a complete renunciation of the king's sovereignty—a common position among the wealthiest of planters.

No republican, Carter mocked his son for seeking political popularity—especially when that bid produced only electoral defeat. Landon insisted that Robert "has merely kissed the arses of the people ... and yet he has been shamefully turned out." For all his private rants against Robert as a gambling fool and a stubborn ingrate, Landon insisted that the county electorate still owed public deference to any Carter who stood for office. In 1778, death spared Landon from the further progress of a republican revolution that he had helped to start but dreaded to see completed.

He left behind a diary to provide, as Isaac puts it, "an unequaled view of a man, like many of his contemporaries, divided within himself." Isaac's probing but rambling biography is full of rich cultural and psychological insights. Isaac sympathetically reveals Carter as a tragic figure, almost as cruel to himself as he was to others. Driven by a perverse but pervasive sense of duty, he alienated almost everyone in his angry wake. And so, as an old man, he felt lonely, slighted, and resentful, without real admirers or true friends. Only reading provided consolation for disappointed power. "Without books or a desire to read," he asked, "how can the aged enjoy themselves when the Young—even their children—seem to despise them?" But even books provoked Carter to scribble denunciations in the margins of offending passages.

Carter never heeded the advice of a political friend, who sighed, "How might he be revered [if he would] strive rather to be loved than feared." But that was rarely possible for a man driven by God's command to rule over an extended and restive family of dependents. When Carter belatedly reconciled with his wayward daughter Judith, he felt obliged to plead with his divine father in a diary entry: "Thus my God have I suffered myself to destroy the divine order in governing this world." By favoring the love of his daughter over the rigid enforcement of paternal power, Carter felt weak and self-indulgent, a failure before the patriarchal God who ruled the planters of British America. ■

Justin Driver

Indelible Marks

BLACK TRIALS: CITIZENSHIP FROM THE BEGINNINGS OF SLAVERY TO THE END OF CASTE
By Mark S. Weiner
(Alfred A. Knopf, 421 pp., $26.95)

"NOTHING SO CHARMS the American people as personal bravery," wrote John Brown in 1851, more than eight years before he stormed Harpers Ferry. Whatever one makes of his assessment of the American character, no one can doubt the sincerity of Brown's belief. Many commentators have offered elaborate theories about what attributes make Americans distinctively American, but few have been so prepared to put their hypotheses to the test. Mark S. Weiner simultaneously embodies and endorses Brown's sentiment, as tales of personal bravery lie at the core of his treatment of African American history. And while no one will ever confuse writing a book with sacrificing one's life, the choices that Weiner makes in framing black history reveal not a little bravery of the intellectual variety, even if Weiner's courage sometimes exceeds his better judgment.

Covering nearly four hundred years of history, Weiner focuses on legal episodes that reveal how the descendants of slaves became citizens and, in the process, helped to transform the national identity. I use the term "legal episodes" because Weiner adopts an appropriately expansive definition of what constitutes a "black trial." Although the law is always implicated, Weiner's episodes are not trials in a strictly legal sense, in that the events do not always culminate in a courtroom showdown. "Black trials," Weiner writes, "are legal events that figure symbolically and dramatically in American culture by making public certain basic ideological conflicts about race and civic life." Weiner contends that an examination of African Americans' relationship to American law is uniquely revealing because over the centuries they have been the group most often deemed undeserving of legal protections: "The story of black trials concerns an especially vital aspect of the history of group inclusion, because the minority community whose status has been of the greatest consequence for the development of our society as a whole ... has been Afro-Americans." Although Weiner explored archives for a few of his pre-1900 chapters, the book is largely a distillation of other research, with exegeses of events ranging from well-known to relatively obscure.

WEINER IDENTIFIES THREE prominent ideological threads that run throughout black history. First, he concentrates on the strong appeals to liberal individualism that have flourished in the nation since the colonial era. Second, he imports the Indian notion of caste to describe the racial hierarchy that whites erected by enslaving blacks and deeming them impure. Third, he stresses the importance of understanding how Christianity shaped the nation's ideals and played a central role in debates concerning the status of blacks. Ultimately, Weiner's book is a study of the diminution of America's racial caste system, as seen through the prisms of liberalism and Christianity.

Weiner complicates the relationship of caste to liberalism and religion by noting that the ideologies contain internal divisions. Although the rhetoric of liberal individualism had been in circulation since well before the country's inception, whites denied blacks liberty and justified their enslavement by deciding that liberalism's protection of property interests dictated that government should refrain from interfering with a white man's property—including his slaves. One can perhaps best locate the jurisprudential

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tension within liberalism in Chief Justice Roger Taney's opinion in *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford* in 1857: "The unhappy black race were separated from the white by indelible marks, and laws long before established, and were never thought of or spoken of except as property, and when the claims of the owner or the profit from the trader were supposed to need protection."

JUST AS LIBERALISM HAS BEEN ENlisted to support both the subjugation and the liberation of blacks, so too has Christianity performed double duty. Invoking the principles of racial caste, white Christians used Scripture to contend that blacks could not become full-fledged Christians because they were descended from Ham. Judges openly expressed such beliefs at least into the 1950s, as evidenced by a little-known decision of the Florida Supreme Court that served to delay the integration of the University of Florida's law school. "When God created man," reasoned Justice Glenn Terrell's concurring opinion in *State ex rel. Hawkins* v. *Board of Control* in 1955, "he allotted each race to his own continent according to color, Europe to the white man, Asia to the yellow man, Africa to the black man, and America to the red man, but we are now advised that God's plan was in error." In sharp contrast to Terrell's analysis, Weiner notes that Christians also served to galvanize "some of the most important drives toward civic egalitarianism and reform in American history, and it was their opposition to racial hierarchy—based on the principle that all are one in the body of Christ—that was to transform the modern Christian outlook on matters of race and ethnicity."

Weiner contends that in the twentieth century liberalism emerged triumphant from among these ideologies. "During the course of American history, advocates of black civic inclusion would use the rhetorical weapons of Christian and liberal jurisprudence to oppose the caste vision of black legal incapacity born of slavery," Weiner writes. "Over the centuries, Afro-Americans and their allies won this fight, destroying caste theories of citizenship, a victory of which our society can justly be proud." In Weiner's account, appeals to the nation's religious foundation receded as liberalism flourished: "The terms of the victory, however, were not only to draw a liberal notion of citizenship more deeply into the heart of American national identity, but also to marginalize the Christian legal vision long central to the fight against caste."

Weiner concludes his book by contending that the American caste system met its demise by the close of the twentieth century. He makes a somewhat surprising claim in identifying Clarence Thomas's confirmation hearings as an associate justice of the Supreme Court as the central moment that illustrated caste's defeat: according to Weiner, the parade of impressive black professionals before the Senate Judiciary Committee, coming in support of both Thomas and Anita Hill (who had accused him of sexual harassment), humanized African Americans in a way that nothing previously had done. The casual acceptance of cross-racial friendships and Thomas's interracial marriage indicated the abatement of notions concerning white purity. Although both parties deployed the rhetoric of racial caste, Weiner argues, the ubiquity of such talk underscores the absence of the ideology itself. When the nation tuned in to watch the hearings, the question was "not the rightness of black inclusion in American civic life, but rather how best to achieve it."

WEINER'S COMMITMENT TO his intellectual framework is unmistakable, but it seems clear that narratives of personal bravery are what most excite him. The episodic approach to history permits Weiner to place great weight on individuals overcoming difficult circumstances. And Weiner is excellent at spinning these yarns. He creates genuine drama when he details the ordeal of Prudence Crandall, who subjected herself to abuse from New England townspeople because she had the temerity to admit a young black woman into her school in the 1830s. Weiner is palpably awed by the courage of Clem Bowden, a sixty-one-year-old black farmer who managed to testify against the Ku Klux Klan before a congressional committee in the 1870s after the local chapter of terrorists attempted to discourage him from participating in the democratic process. Weiner is also quite strong in detailing how Judge J. Waties Waring, once the very embodiment of South Carolina's ruling class, turned himself into an outcast in the early 1950s by holding the untimely view that the Constitution prohibited school segregation.

At his best, Weiner adopts a clear-eyed and unromanticized approach to black history, one that is all too often lacking in the field. Regrettably, many writers of black history seem as if they should replace their pens with pom-poms. Writing history, of course, invariably requires making choices that advance a particular narrative, but these choices should not involve ignoring inconvenient facts that might place a few black people in an unflattering light. By sanitizing events in an effort to prove that blacks are not somehow subhuman, historians, often unwittingly, overcompensate in the opposite direction and make them appear superhuman.

To his credit, Weiner does not flinch from delivering truths that help to humanize rather than valorize the character of African Americans. Blacks have sometimes been courageous and selfless, but—just like every other group of humans—they have also displayed less high-minded ideals. So, in Weiner's account, Africans actually sell other Africans into slavery, and one of the Scottsboro Boys, Clarence Norris, falsely testifies that a rape had occurred in an effort to exonerate himself: "I saw that negro just on the stand, Weems, rape one of those girls. I saw that myself.... I did not go down in the car and I did not have my hands on the girls at all, but I saw that one rape her. They all raped her, every one of them." Weiner's candid discussion of these episodes demonstrates a fine appreciation of historical ambiguity.

Weiner is particularly strong when dismissing the claims of some scholars who contend that the status of blacks in America over the last half-century has been marked more by continuity than by change. "The memory of Jim Crow is fading so rapidly ... that today one sometimes hears otherwise sensible people, keen to improve our society, equate the racial inequalities of our own time with those of America before World War II, or during the 1950s and 1960s," Weiner observes, with appropriate contempt for the view that nothing has changed. "It is not an uncommon view, and however preposterous it may be, the moral power it is accorded, with the best of intentions, ensures it some longevity." The nostalgia for certain aspects of life in the Jim Crow era espoused by a number of vocal black scholars is an alarming trend that Weiner's history ably counteracts.

Weiner also makes whites prominent in his telling of black history. Though he often casts whites in the role of villain, he

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is unapologetic about portraying them as heroes in the quest for black citizenship. One of the central debates among scholars of African American history over the last seventy-five years has concerned how much historical agency should be imputed to blacks before the age of civil rights. (The debate has been most pronounced with respect to historical treatments of slavery, but echoes of that debate have reverberated throughout the study of black history.) For a long period, historians viewed blacks largely as the pawns of white abolitionists and their ilk—as bit players in the story of their own liberation, since freedom was something conferred on them rather than attained by them. This view was rightly seen as being woefully in need of revision. Eventually the pendulum swung in the other direction, and historians now stress the strategies of resistance that blacks utilized in seeking their own liberation during slavery and how they later accomplished the central objectives of the civil rights movement. Weiner enjoys only limited success at carving out some sustainable middle ground in this debate. But his book is admirable in its aims, and he is right to insist that one cannot tell the story of the struggle for black citizenship without understanding that whites aided in that struggle.

WEINER'S BOOK WOULD BE stronger still if he were more willing to challenge the received wisdom about a number of the Supreme Court justices who are his subjects. In his discussion of the leading anti-canonical case in all of American law, Weiner observes that "the ringing endorsement of slavery they produced was written by Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney of Maryland, one of the most respected jurists of his time (and, despite *Dred Scott*, still one of the great justices in the history of the Court)." Despite President Bush's condemnation of Taney's most infamous opinion in a recent presidential debate, Weiner enjoys good company in asserting Taney's greatness, an assessment chiefly attributable to his stewardship of the Court through the nation's adolescence. In 1936, no less a personage than Felix Frankfurter termed Taney "second only to [Chief Justice John] Marshall in the constitutional law of our country."

But Frankfurter's praise reflects more the contemporaneous debates regarding judicial restraint than it does an accurate assessment of Taney's legacy. Important as some of his decisions on federalism were, Taney may be viewed as largely a transitional figure. And his record is irrevocably marred by his repeated mishandling of the most pressing and most primary issue of his time. It is too clever to dismiss his opinions in *Prigg* v. *Pennsylvania*, *Strader* v. *Graham*, and *Dred Scott* as mere blind spots. When it mattered most, Taney's opinion failed as law, failed as history, and failed as morality.

Weiner also offers an overly sanguine assessment of Justice John Marshall Harlan's dissent in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* in 1896:

> A southerner by birth and a former slaveholder (though a Unionist and colonel in the northern army during the Civil War), Harlan was by early training no racial egalitarian; he had once opposed the Thirteenth Amendment. Yet he underwent a true political conversion after the war and,

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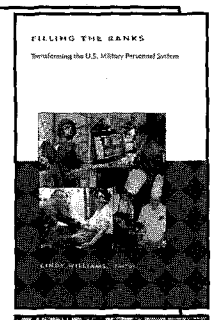

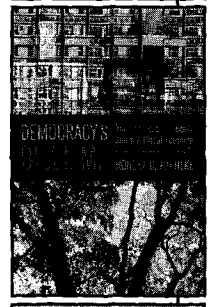

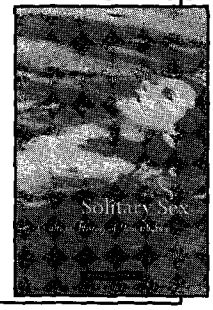

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whatever his continuing views on social equality and his racial pride, came to believe that blacks were fully entitled to the inclusion in American civic life enunciated in the Reconstruction Amendments.

Although Weiner highlights the celebrated portions of Harlan's *Plessy* dissent, he gives no further attention to the idea buried in the dependent clause of that last sentence. Using the euphemism "racial pride" does nothing to mitigate Harlan's championing of white supremacy. In addition to an ugly aside about the fundamentally alien nature of "the Chinese race," Harlan wrote: "The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time."

The point is not to demonstrate that Harlan's opinion is incompatible with modern racial attitudes. Vilifying racial prejudice from the 1890s offers considerably less sport than shooting fish in a barrel; and, more importantly, it is an aggressively anti-historical endeavor. Today's conventional wisdom, moreover, has a way of becoming tomorrow's bigotry. But confronting headlong the contradictory impulses and complexity in Harlan's dissent permits a deeper appreciation of his forward thinking on civic equality. Instead of eliding that complexity, Weiner should have embraced it.

And Weiner repeats the tired argument that Justice Thomas's opposition to affirmative action amounts to hypocrisy because he benefited from such programs in the past. This claim has roughly the same amount of force as the argument that John Kerry's support of a progressive tax structure is hypocritical because a person of his wealth has benefited from tax cuts. Being a beneficiary of a particular system does not compel one to endorse that system. Both Thomas and Kerry criticize programs that they view as unjust and unwise, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of either man's convictions. Proponents of affirmative action would do better to engage Thomas on the merits of the argument rather than continue this seemingly endless game of biographical gotcha.

AT TIMES, WEINER PLACES more weight on religion's role in motivating change than it can credibly be expected to bear. His discussions of the resolve that prompted Prudence Crandall and John Brown to resist social norms illustrate his overly reverent approach to Christianity. "Despite its obvious difficulties," Weiner writes, "the prospect of enrolling a black student must have appealed to Crandall's heart from the first. After all, she had been raised by Quakers, the first religious group in history to prohibit slaveholders among its members." Similarly, Weiner's treatment of John Brown begins: "Born in 1800 in West Torrington, Connecticut, John Brown was taught to honor his parents and to fear God. His mother was the daughter of a Congregationalist minister...."

Such an account resolves the matter of motivation a bit too tidily. While it is true that evangelical faith ran quite high in the mid-eighteenth century, few people then—like few people now—willingly endangered their lives for the advancement of a despised group. The motives of human action are compound and mysterious. Admittedly, Brown thought that he was a messenger from God, but it is not the claim of divine inspiration that set the violent Brown apart from his contemporaries. Indeed, Weiner's acknowledgment that faith was unimportant to some of the men who accompanied Brown on the Harpers Ferry raid should have prompted him to be more equivocal on the role of religiosity. If devoutly religious people are willing to tolerate oppression in their midst, it seems misguided to emphasize that it is religious fervor that motivated Crandall and Brown rather than a fervor to eradicate oppression.

WEINER IS ON SHAKIER ground still in his discussion of the social science relied upon by the Supreme Court in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. His focus on caste prompts him to read Chief Justice Earl Warren's decision as significant because it stressed the mental toll that segregation had inflicted upon blacks. "In the near term," Weiner remarks, "[*Brown*] was an acknowledgment, for the first time, that the Afro-American self had been psychologically damaged by the perverse logic of the law." Accordingly, Weiner aims to extol *Brown*'s sociologically driven Footnote 11 and more generally the work of Kenneth B. Clark.

In conjunction with the South Carolina component of *Brown*, Clark conducted a test on sixteen black schoolchildren in which he presented them with images of a black doll and a white doll and asked a series of questions, including: which doll is nice? Which doll is bad? Which doll looks like you? The answers to these questions supposedly indicated that the black schoolchildren experienced feelings of racial inferiority. Weiner describes Clark and his work in glowing terms: "Clark was a scholar destined for great renown, and an intellectual whose research flowed naturally from the currents in social science and political thought characteristic of his time." And he labels the doll study an "emblem of *Brown* itself" and calls the social-science statement submitted to the Court "a statement still celebrated in academic circles for the social good it brought." Indeed, Weiner believes that the doll studies supplied the broad contours of the opinion in the school desegregation decision: "In the way those studies explained the interaction between culture and the self in the world of Jim Crow, they paralleled the very bridge between the self and the state that *Brown* hypothesized in its interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment."

While it is true that Clark's social science became an emblem of *Brown*, his work enjoys nothing approaching the

Modernism 2

News of the world comes late
and slightly out of hearing
boys marching off to war
heelprints in heathrows, shapes
the widows turn at night
burr-in-the-sides and
shadows walk the hilltops
so long they seem to sweep
down, joining forces
to dredge, then claim the lawn
where the last light is siphoned
where all the failings lean
away, the elegy streaming
on and on the Gibson girls
keep screaming. Picture
the wide lawn of summer
where the body, sleeping,
spends its pack of years, then
picture apnea ("the transient
cessation of respiration")
a black boat on the lake.

DOUG SANDERS

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universally rosy reception that Weiner's gushing account suggests. Many contemporary observers thought that *Brown* was too important and delicate a decision to rest on the vagaries of doll preferences. The Court had been developing precedents on desegregating higher education in the years prior to 1954; those decisions and their animating principles should have been sufficient justification to outlaw segregated schools. Even key members of the legal team dedicated to ending school segregation took a dim view of introducing Clark's evidence. "Of all the debunkers, I was the most debunking," William T. Coleman Jr. allowed in Richard Kluger's definitive account of *Brown*. "Jesus Christ, those damned dolls! I thought it was a joke."

BEYOND THE CONCERNS ABOUT the introduction of sociological materials into a trial record, many commentators had legitimate concerns about the methodological quality of Clark's work. Sixteen schoolchildren is far too small a sample size from which to extrapolate. In addition, Edmond Cahn wrote in 1955 that Clark's work betrayed a foreordained view of the student responses: "If Negro children say a *brown* doll is like themselves, [Clark] infers that segregation has made them conscious of race; yet if they say a *white* doll is like themselves, he infers that segregation has forced them to evade reality."

Even ten years after Cahn noted this important methodological flaw, Clark continued to make precisely the same mistake in logic. Consider this passage from his most lasting work, *Dark Ghetto*:

> The preoccupation of many Negroes with hair straighteners, skin bleachers, and the like illustrates this tragic aspect of American racial prejudice—Negroes have come to believe in their own inferiority. In recent years Negro men and women have rebelled against the constant struggle to become white and have given special emphasis to their "Negroid" features and hair textures in a self-conscious acceptance of "negritude"—a wholehearted embracing of the African heritage. But whether a Negro woman uses hair straightener or whether she highlights her natural hair texture by flaunting *au naturel* styles, whether a Negro man hides behind a neat Ivy League suit or wears blue jeans defiantly in the manner of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), each is still reacting primarily to the pervasive factor of race and still not free to take himself for granted or to judge himself by the usual standards of personal success and character.

Clark had many virtues, but conducting rigorous social science was not among them. It is folly to believe that the Supreme Court owes one of its greatest achievements to his work.

IS CASTE DEAD? WEINER'S ANALYSIS leads ineluctably to this question. The answer, of course, is that it all depends on what you mean by "caste." Weiner is not as direct as he might have been on this score, but it is clear that he does not use the term synonymously with racism. Weiner understands that racial prejudice continues to have real consequences. He seems to believe that caste is dead because repulsion is no longer the most prominent feeling that most whites have toward blacks. Under this exceedingly modest claim, Weiner has a point.

But as he expands upon this claim, his description of the modern racial landscape appears myopic. "The destitution of the ghetto affects far more than those who live there," Weiner writes. "The criminality its conditions breed has tended to stigmatize all blacks with an association with violence and lawlessness—caste is dead, but black legal exile is not—a phenomenon that has substantially hindered their full assimilation into mainstream civic life, despite their collective social and economic accomplishments." This is much too simple. Whatever the association with criminality that is projected onto middle-class African Americans, anti-black attitudes are more pervasive and more fundamental than Weiner's analysis permits.

Weiner's account may explain the familiar tale of black professionals who have difficulty hailing cabs. Yet transportation woes are the least of the black professional's concerns. Far more troubling is the lingering skepticism about the cognitive capacity of blacks. It is in these speculations—not about poor blacks, but about all blacks—that traces of racial caste are most readily identifiable. Only ten years have passed, remember, since the publication of *The Bell Curve*.

"From a historical perspective," Weiner declares, "careers like those of Vernon Jordan, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Clarence Thomas, and their complete acceptance in the most prominent roles of the national elite, signals a true revolution in America. Caste, the white republic, a world of white purity and black pollution, is dead." But surely the acceptance of African Americans is not nearly as complete as Weiner would have it. Consider the case of Clarence Thomas. His judicial opinions on voting rights and the establishment clause demonstrate that he is far and away the current justice most willing to rethink entire doctrinal areas if he believes that a line of cases warrants a novel approach. Despite this independence of thought, Thomas is often depicted as Justice Antonin Scalia's one-man amen corner, a portrayal eerily reminiscent of the power that Justice William Brennan supposedly exercised over Justice Thurgood Marshall. Though several pairs of justices generally vote together, no white justice has been perceived to be so thoroughly in the hip pocket of another justice in the Supreme Court's modern era. This perception suggests a deep reluctance to view black jurists as capable of developing their own juridical philosophies.

Conditions for African Americans have improved dramatically in the last forty years. Thanks to the achievements of the civil rights movement, there has never been a better time to be black in America. This is worth remembering, not least because the story of black progress has not exactly been a tale of manifest destiny. The trend has been generally upward, but each decade has not always been better than the one preceding it. If caste is dead, the remnants of caste continue to exercise a powerful hold on the nation's consciousness. While some blacks are no longer deemed untouchables, they too often remain undesirables. ■

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CLAREMORE DIARIST

Vote Righteously!

I DON'T REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST realized that my campaign for United States Senate was in trouble. But one moment stands out. I was in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, home of the annual Grapes of Wrath Festival, in which locals celebrate John Steinbeck's fictional Joad family and their mythical journey from eastern Oklahoma to California. It was a Sunday morning, one week before the third anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and I had been invited by the pastor of a local Baptist church to discuss the topic: "How Would Jesus Vote?" Both my opponent in the Senate race, Tom Coburn, and I had been invited to what was more or less an interview before the pastor's congregation. I would go first, then Coburn would speak the following Sunday, and a right-wing talk-radio host—no friend of mine, to be sure—would conclude the three-week inquiry into how Jesus would want us to cast our ballots.

NOW, I MUST CONFESS: MY OWN VIEW is that Jesus would probably not vote at all, given the organized corruption that passes for modern American politics. But the idea that Christ Himself might sit out the 2004 election was apparently not under consideration, so I accepted the invitation—much to the pastor's avowed surprise. As an active Baptist who grew up in the Baptist church, I had no illusions that most of my co-religionists were ardent Democrats, but I rarely turned down any chance to make the case for my own candidacy and that of my fellow party members. After all, wasn't Daniel blessed for braving the lion's den?

AS I ARRIVED AT THE CHURCH, MY WIFE and I were given the church bulletin, which outlined the weekly selection of hymns and Bible readings. On the back of the bulletin, atop the blank space reserved for copious note-taking during the sermon, was the heading: "WWJV? PRO-LIFE OR PRO-DEATH?" (I favored the partial-birth abortion ban but opposed overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*.) In the sanctuary, a 20-by-20-foot depiction of a fetus looked down upon the assembled throng from a projection screen. Superimposed upon the unsettling image—which morphed to show the fetus in various stages of gestation—was fact after fact about abortions in America.

AFTER THE MORNING RITUALS, THE pastor called me to the stage, and we engaged in a lengthy discussion about abortion, homosexuality, "liberal judges," and other controversial matters. After leaving the stage, I rejoined the congregation, and the pastor launched into an attack on the "pro-choice terrorists," who were, to his mind, far more dangerous than Al Qaeda. Yes, he acknowledged, thousands had died on September 11, but abortion was killing millions and millions. This was a holocaust, he continued, and we must all vote righteously. *Vote righteously*! In 13 months of campaigning across the vast state of Oklahoma, I must have seen or heard this phrase a thousand times, often on the marquees of churches, where, outside of election season, one finds only clever and uplifting biblical bromides. But it was not until that September Sunday in Sallisaw, one of the most Democratic towns in Oklahoma, that I first understood that the seemingly innocuous phrase "vote righteously" was the slogan not of a few politicized churches, but the cri de coeur of millions—millions who fervently believe that their most deeply held values are under assault and who further see this assault as at least tolerated by the Democratic Party, if not actually led by it.

AS A DEFEATED SENATE CANDIDATE IN the most red of red states, many people have asked me for insights into the Democratic Party's failure to connect with culturally conservative voters. Much has already been written on this topic, and scholars will add more. But I do know this: The culture war is real, and it is a conflict not merely about some particular policy or legislative item, but about modernity itself. Banning gay marriage or abortion would not be sufficient to heal the cultural gulf that exists in this nation. The culture war is about matters more fundamental still: whether nationality is, in a globalized world, a random fact of no more significance than what hospital one was born in or whether it is the source of identity and even political legitimacy; whether one's self is a matter of choice or whether it is predetermined, before birth, by the cultural membership of one's family; whether an individual is just that—a free-floating atom—or whether the individual is part of a long chain that both predates and continues long after any particular person; whether concepts like honor and shame, which seem so quaint, are still relevant in a world that values only "tolerance." These are questions not for politicians but for philosophers, and, in the end, it is the failure of liberal philosophy that we saw on November 2.

FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF OKLAhomans—and, I would suspect, voters in other red states—these transcendent cultural concerns are more important than universal health care or raising the minimum wage or preserving farm subsidies. Pace Thomas Frank, the voters aren't deluded or uneducated. They simply reject the notion that material concerns are more real than spiritual or cultural ones. The political left has always had a hard time understanding this, preferring to believe that the masses are enthralled by a "false consciousness" or Fox News or whatever today's excuse might be. But the truth is quite simple: Most voters in a state like Oklahoma—and I venture to say most other Southern and Midwestern states—reject the general direction of American culture and celebrate the political party that promises to reform or revise it.

THAT IS WHAT ANTONIN SCALIA famously called the Kulturkampf. And there can be no doubt either that this is a fundamental dynamic in American politics or on which side of this conflict the electorate rests. Last Tuesday, I ran 7 percent ahead of John Kerry, and my opponent ran a full 13 percent behind President Bush. In most states, this would have been more than sufficient to ensure my victory. But not in Oklahoma. At least not last Tuesday. And, while the defeat was all my own, the failure was of the party to which I swear allegiance, which uncritically embraces a modernity that so many others reject.

BRAD CARSON

Brad Carson represents Oklahoma's second congressional district.

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Avoiding Breadlines for Flu Vaccines

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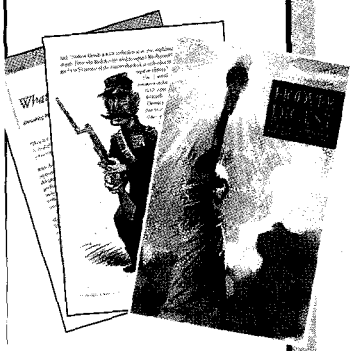

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A recent *New York Times* article on the shortage of vaccines stated that "the heart of the problem, experts say, may be that no one person or agency is in charge of making sure the United States has an adequate vaccine supply." In fact, **the heart of the problem is too much centralized government control.**

No one person or agency is in charge of making sure the United States has an adequate supply of bread. Do you line up for hours for bread? No one is in charge of making sure we have an adequate supply of VCRs, TVs, or computers, yet anyone willing to pay the price can get one easily.

The reason markets work so well is precisely that no one is in charge. Instead, thousands of producers and millions of customers make decisions that mesh. If the price of bread is too low, for example, so that not everyone who wants bread at that price can get it, then producers and retailers raise the price of bread and producers make more bread at the higher price. Vaccines aren't special. It's true that flu vaccine not used this year must be thrown out. But bread not used *this week* must be thrown out, and there's no shortage of bread.

Indeed, the countries in the world that have done the worst are those in which one person or agency is in charge. In the Soviet Union, one agency was in charge of making sure people had an adequate supply of bread. The result was that breadlines were common. And lesser attempts at central planning, such as government-set price controls, have also caused shortages. Nixon's price controls on gasoline in 1973 and Carter's in 1979, for example, caused long lines for gasoline.

Similarly, price controls threaten the supply of vaccines. In 1993 Congress passed former first lady Hillary Clinton's Vaccines for Children program, under which the government now purchases more than half the national supply of children's vaccines at a forced 50 percent discount and then distributes it to doctors who administer it to the poor and uninsured—despite a General Accounting Office report at the time stating that "vaccines are already free" for the truly needy. **One result of price control programs and liability laws has been that the number of vaccine producers has fallen in thirty years from twenty-five down to five.** For some vaccines, there is only one producer.

Tommy Thompson, secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, has urged state attorneys general to go after those who they think price influenza vaccines "too high." The vaccine business is already a high-risk one, due to a limited product shelf life, uncertain demand, and lawsuits. Do threats of price controls make being in the vaccine business *more* attractive?

The solution to our vaccine problems is not to put one agency in charge but, instead, to reduce the role of government so that the vaccine market acts more like the U.S. bread market and less like the Soviet one.

—David R. Henderson

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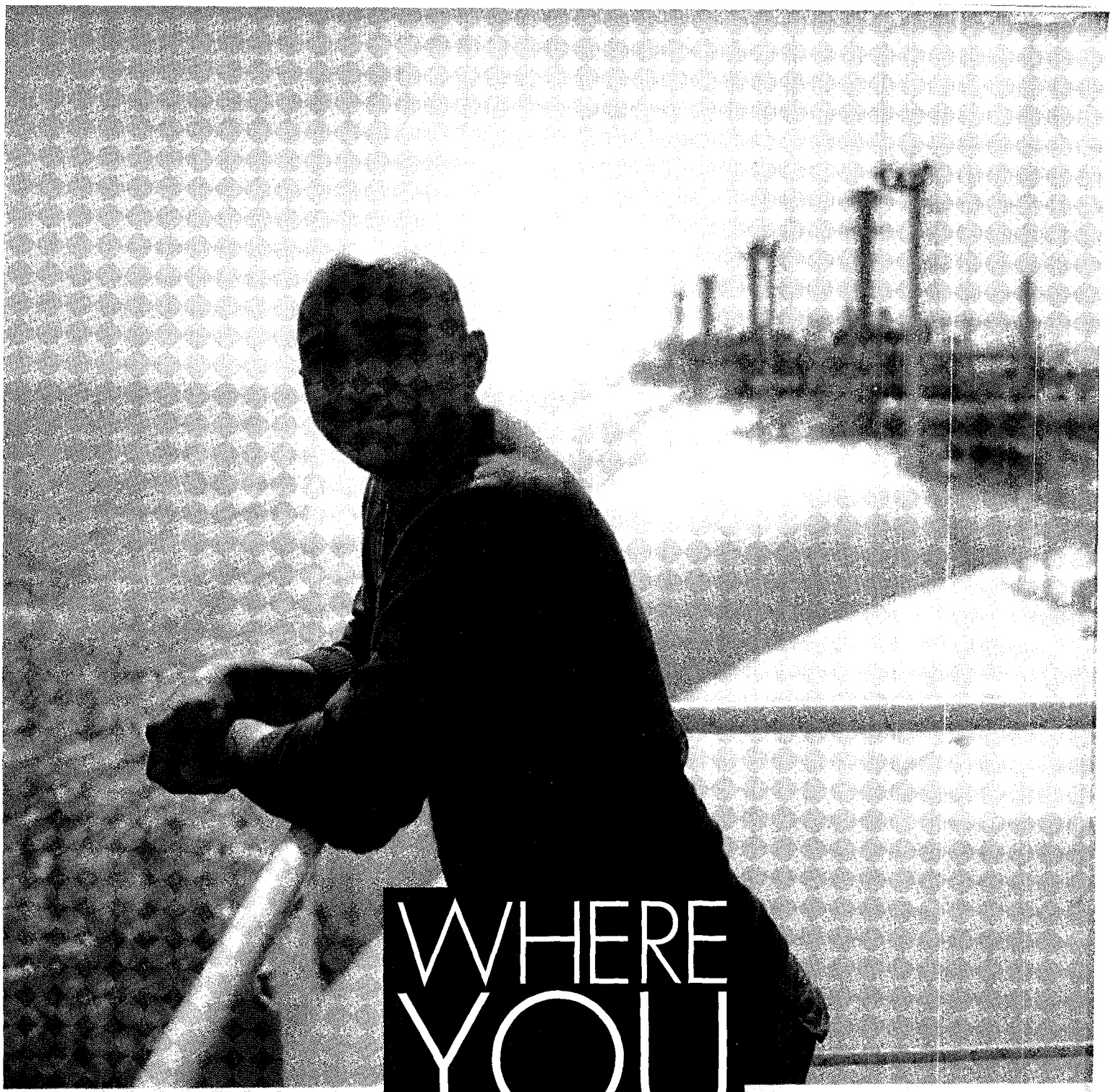

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